

NOTICE OF FUNDING OPPORTUNITY
U.S. Olive Oil Data Collection for Codex

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1. Basic Information

1.1 Executive Summary

The U.S. Department of Agriculture, Foreign Agricultural Service, Trade and Regulatory Capacity Building, announces this funding opportunity to support Assisting Specialty Crop Exports by issuing a new award. This opportunity is available to all eligible applicants and is intended to support U.S. olive oil producers' access to current and prospective foreign markets. Principally, this agreement will support U.S. olive oil producers by funding the data collection and testing costs necessary for U.S. olive oil producers to be responsive to the Codex Alimentarius Committee on Fats and Oils (CCFO)'s request for data to update the Codex Olive Oil standard on quality parameters, pyropheophytin (PPP) and 1,2-diglycerides (DAGs).

1.2 Federal Agency Name

United States Department of Agriculture, Foreign Agricultural Service (USDA/FAS)

1.3 Funding Opportunity Title

U.S. Olive Oil Data Collection for Codex

1.4 Announcement Type

New Announcement

1.5 Funding Opportunity Number

USDA-FAS-10621-0750-10.-25-0001

1.6 Assistance Listing Number

10.621 Assisting Specialty Crop Exports

1.7 Funding Details

Total Available Federal Funding: \$2,200,000

The initial funding amount will be up to \$1,000,000. Subject to availability of funding, a cumulative total of \$2,200,000, may be available throughout the period of performance of the award. See Section 9, Other Information, for additional information on incremental funding.

Anticipated Number of Awards: 1

USDA/FAS reserves the right to make additional awards under this opportunity if additional funding becomes available after the original selections are made, consistent with agency policy and guidance. Any additional selections for awards will be made no later than 6 months after the original selection decisions.

1.8 Key Dates

Deadline for Question Submission: January 6, 2025

Application Submission Deadline:
Time

January 13, 2025 at 11:59pm Eastern Standard

1.9 Agency Contact Information

For all inquiries, contact:

Name: Angel Gonzalez

Email Address: angel.gonzalez@usda.gov

Phone Number: 202-615-1742

Hours of Operation: 9:00am – 5:30pm Eastern Standard Time

2. Eligibility

2.1 Eligible Applicants

Colleges and universities in the United States, including State Cooperative Institutions as defined at 7 USC 3103; State governments; Nonprofits with or without 501(c)(3) status; international organizations; foreign entities; and any other entity.

All applicants must have an active registration in the U.S. Government System for Award Management (www.sam.gov) before the application submission deadline of the announcement. Applicants with inactive, expired, pending, or excluded listings will be deemed ineligible. Exceptions, waivers, or extensions will not be considered. More information about SAM.gov registration can be found in Section 9, Other Information.

2.2 Substantial Compliance

All applications will be reviewed for eligibility and must meet the eligibility requirements described above to be considered eligible. Applicants deemed ineligible for funding consideration as a result of the threshold eligibility review will be notified 15 calendar days of the ineligibility determination.

Applications must substantially comply with the application submission instructions and requirements set forth in Section 4, Application Contents and Format, of this solicitation or else they will be deemed ineligible for funding consideration.

2.3 Evidence of Eligibility

Applicants are responsible for including documentation, if necessary, establishing that they meet the stated eligibility requirements, when it is not immediately obvious. Applicants should not presume that USDA/FAS is sufficiently familiar with their organization that this is unnecessary, and USDA/FAS will not make assumptions as to the nature of the applicant's organization.

2.4 Funding Restrictions

Generally, funds may not be used in any manner that is prohibited by applicable regulations, including 2 CFR Part 200 and 2 CFR Part 400. Awards issued pursuant to this notice of funding opportunity may only be used for the purpose set forth in the award, consistent with the statutory authority for the award. Capital expenses, such as the purchase of equipment, not entirely attributable to this award, must be pro-rated.

For example, agreement funds and other support may not be used for matching contributions for other federal grants or cooperative agreements, lobbying, or intervention in federal regulatory or adjudicatory proceedings. Federal employees are prohibited from acting as an agent of the applicant in any capacity (paid or unpaid) on any proposal submitted under this program. Also, federal funds may not be used to sue the Federal Government or any other government entity.

Compensation for personal services: Employees, consultants, or other personnel, including those of subrecipients, and regardless of the method of engagement, may not exceed the pro-rata equivalent of GS-15 on the General Schedule (for 2024, \$159,950 per year, \$612.84 per day, or \$76.60 per hour). Non-monetizable fringe benefits, such as health insurance coverage, are not included to this ceiling.

In general, costs incurred for a common or joint purpose benefitting more than one cost objective but not readily assignable to specific awards, without effort disproportionate to the results achieved, are considered indirect costs. These may include facilities not specific to individual projects, enterprise-wide services such as IT, and enterprise management. Pursuant to USDA Departmental Regulation DR2255-001, a Negotiated Indirect Cost Rate Agreement (NICRA) with a cognizant U.S. Government agency will be honored, except where prohibited by statute.

If an application is submitted that includes any ineligible tasks, activities, or cost items, that portion of the application will be deemed ineligible for funding and may, depending on the extent to which it affects the application, render the entire application ineligible for funding.

2.5 Multiple Applications

An individual applicant may not submit more than one application in response to this NOFO, and may not be offered more than one award.

2.6 Cost Share/Match Requirement

None/Not Required

3. Program Description

U.S. [Specialty Crop](#) producers face many unique barriers to successfully exporting their high-value products to international markets. The USDA Foreign Agricultural Service's [Assisting Specialty Crop Exports \(ASCE\)](#) Initiative goal is to support U.S. specialty crop exporters by helping address non-tariff trade barriers.

Across the United States, U.S. olive oil producers are producing award-winning olive oils to meet the growing demand for authentic, high-quality olive oil. With demand for olive oil growing around the world, U.S. producers are poised to expand their offerings, both domestically and overseas. A barrier facing U.S. producers is the lack of representation of U.S. data within established international olive oil standards. Because U.S. olive oil is produced under different geoclimatic conditions from other regions of the world, its quality and identity parameters may vary from oils produced in different growing areas.

The Codex Standard for Olive Oils and Olive Pomace Oils is a key international standard that many countries use as a basis for national standards of identity for olive oil, as well as serving as the basis for commercial terms of trade. The current Codex Standard does not reflect the diversity of oils produced across the United States for all parameters. The United States and other countries would like to see two key quality parameters, pyropheophytin (PPP) and 1,2-diglycerides (DAGs), included in the Codex Standard for Olive Oils and Olive Pomace oils.

The Codex Committee on Fats and Oils (CCFO) which oversees revisions to the Codex olive oil standard, has an electronic working group (EWG) which is collecting data on PPP and DAGs from a broad spectrum of producers around the world. As this data is collected and organized, it will be shared by countries with the Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations (FAO) for analysis and determination of suitability of these quality parameters for future inclusion in the Codex olive oil standard. Gathering this data in the United States has been difficult in the past as the producers are spread across many states, and the high costs of collecting, storing, and analyzing samples in order to obtain this data. This project will help address this need and will fund the data collection and analysis to support U.S. olive oil producers. The United States government will submit this nationally representative data to the Codex Committee on Fats and Oils (CCFO) to support the committee in making sure that the international standards are inclusive and representative all producers.

NOFO Goal and Objectives

The ASCE project goal is to support U.S. olive oil producers by funding the collecting, testing, and compilation of olive oil data from across the United States olive oil producing areas, which the United States can submit on behalf of U.S. producers to the Codex Alimentarius CCFO in response to the Codex Alimentarius CCFO *Request for the submission of scientific data and information on olive oil* ([CL 2024/36](#) – FO, Dated May 2024). With the 2024/2025 harvest season already underway, this is a time sensitive need. The details of this Codex Alimentarius CCFO Request for Data which outlines Codex’s requirements for the data collection, testing, and analysis are here: [fao.org/fao-who-codexalimentarius/sh-proxy/en/?lnk=1&url=https%253A%252F%252Fworkspace.fao.org%252Fsites%252Fcodex%252FCircular%252520Letters%252FCL%2525202024-36%252Fcl24_36e.pdf](https://www.fao.org/fao-who-codexalimentarius/sh-proxy/en/?lnk=1&url=https%253A%252F%252Fworkspace.fao.org%252Fsites%252Fcodex%252FCircular%252520Letters%252FCL%2525202024-36%252Fcl24_36e.pdf)

This project has three primary activities to meet the Codex Request for Data: 1) work with a representative selection of U.S. olive oil producers to collect appropriate extra virgin olive oil samples from each U.S. olive oil producing state over three consecutive harvest seasons, beginning with the 2024/25 season; 2) use the appropriate Codex methods as specified by the Codex CCFO protocol to test the samples for specific olive oil parameters at specific time intervals; and 3) record the results of the data in the format required by the Codex CCFO in a timely manner, and submit the results and analysis to USDA/FAS.

1. Collection Plan:

- The applicant must develop and submit a plan to collect extra virgin olive oil samples from each U.S. olive oil producing state from harvest year 2024/2025 and the following two harvest years, for a total of three collection cycles. The U.S. olive oil producing states are California, Arizona, Texas, Georgia, Florida, Oregon, and Hawaii. The collection plan must consider the harvest times for the United States and indicate the

collection times that are appropriate for the region. Each collection cycle must include, at a minimum, 40 samples. For each collection cycle, no more than 50 percent of the samples can originate from California in order to generate a diverse array of samples from the range of U.S. olive oil producing states, so the data in the study represents the diversity of U.S. olive oil production.

- The collection plan must include details on the size, number, and material of the collection vessel; the volume of the samples in the collection vessel and the headspace volume; the storage temperature (or temperatures if more than one will be used); and the plan for sample disbursement for testing at each sampling time (detailed below in Testing Frequency Table) including method of shipping. The collection plan must indicate how the samples will be collected and stored at the receiving laboratory.
- Production Information: The specific growing and production information must be included for each sample obtained. The collection plan should include instructions to the entity providing the sample that will allow this information to be reported in a uniform manner. The production information that must be provided for each sample are:
 - Olive variety (indicate if the sample is a blend of varieties)
 - Olive maturity index and the method used for calculation
 - Date of harvest and date of milling
 - Post extraction treatment (e.g. filtration/settling)
 - Date of blending/bottling

2. Testing Plan:

- The applicant must develop and submit a plan to test the collected samples using the Codex-endorsed methods for each designated parameter. For parameters that have more than one acceptable method, the tester must indicate which method is used, as the two methods are not identical and may show variability in their results. Therefore, the method chosen shall be consistently used for the whole data collection. The parameters and testing methods for the Codex data call include:

Parameter	Method
1,2-diglycerides (DAGs)	COI/T.20/Doc. No 32 or ISO 29822
Pyropheophytin (PPP)	ISO 29841
Acidity, free acid value (FFA)	ISO 660 / COI/T.20/Doc. No 34/Rev. 1 / AOCS Cd 3d-63
Peroxide value	COI/T.20/Doc. No 35 or ISO 3960 / AOCS Cd 8b-90
Absorbency in ultra violet (K ₂₃₂ , K ₂₇₀ , ΔK)	COI/T.20/Doc. No. 19 or ISO 3656 or AOCS Ch 5- 91
Fatty acid ethyl ester content (FAEE)	COI/T.20/Doc. No 28
Organoleptic characteristics (panel test)	COI/T.20/Doc. No 15

- The frequency of testing for each collection cycle is at 3-month intervals, beginning at T=0 and ending with T=24 (a total of nine occurrences).

Project Year	Testing Frequency
Year 1	2024/25 harvest samples: T=0, T=3, T=6, T=9, T=12

Year 2	2024/25 harvest samples: T=15, T=18, T=21, T=24 2025/26 harvest samples: T=0, T=3, T=6, T=9, T=12
Year 3	2025/26 harvest samples: T=15, T=18, T=21, T=24 2026/27 harvest samples: T=0, T=3, T=6, T=9, T=12
Year 4	2026/27 harvest samples: T=15, T=18, T=21, T=24

- Initial Conditions Data: The testing plan must also collect the initial condition data on the following parameters at T=0 for each sample collection to document the initial conditions of each of the samples:
 - Temperature of storage during study period
 - Exposure to light (e.g., dark, ambient light, artificial light for eight hours/day, etc.) during study period
 - Type and size of container in which the oil is stored (e.g., clear glass bottle, dark glass bottle, metal, transparent PET, etc.)
 - Volume of air on top of the bottle and whether the air was purged with an inert gas.
 - Fatty acid composition (using the Codex endorsed methods)
 - Trans fatty acid content (using the Codex endorsed methods)
 - Total sterol composition (using the Codex endorsed methods)
 - Any other parameters that may influence the results.
- Based on the Codex requirements, the applicant must provide contact information for the laboratory(s) which will be doing the testing, as well as the address, affiliation/accreditation status (e.g., ISO certified), and capability and experience to perform these tests. If this is not provided, the data may not be eligible for the U.S. submission to Codex.

3. Data Recording, Analysis, and Submission:

- For each sample at T=0, the initial conditions data outlined in the testing plan must be recorded in an Excel spreadsheet.
- For each sample (T=0 through T=24), the lifecycle data must be recorded with the following information:
 - Sample ID
 - Monthly (Time, T=0, etc.)
 - DAGs (% 1,2 DAG) (note: the method used shall be indicated and shall be consistently used throughout the entire data collection)
 - PPP (% PPP)
 - FFA (% m/m as oleic acid)
 - PV (milliequivalents of active oxygen per kg/oil)
 - FAEE (mg/kg)
 - UV – K₂₃₂
 - UV K₂₇₀
 - UV ΔK
 - Sensory analysis: (median of fruitiness attribute)
 - Sensory analysis: (median of defect mostly perceived (if present – specify type))
- The Production Information must be collected on each sample.

- The data/results should be stored in a manner where it is readily available for review by USDA/FAS, including in case ad-hoc data submissions to Codex are necessary.
- On September 1, 2025, the production information, the initial conditions, and all lifecycle data collected will be submitted to USDA/FAS. This submission deadline ensures that USDA/FAS and the U.S. Codex Office will be able to submit the data to meet the Codex CCFO Request for Data deadlines. An analysis and summary of the testing data should be developed, in coordination with USDA/FAS and the U.S. Codex delegation experts, to inform and support the submission package and report of the data to Codex.
- Throughout 2025-2027, data will continue to be collected and submitted to USDA/FAS on a regular basis, at a minimum of two times a year. Each year, the data collected (the Production Information, the Initial Conditions data, and the testing results over the lifecycle) must be shared in a report with USDA/FAS.
- Following the project conclusion, all collected data must be presented to USDA/FAS, including a short summary and analysis of the collected data, to inform and support the work of the United States delegation at CCFO, allowing them to represent and explain the findings from the study.

3.1 Authorizing Statutes and Regulations

Commodity Credit Corporation Charter Act, 15 USC § 714c(f)

3.2 Type of Assistance Instrument

USDA/FAS anticipates that a Cooperative Agreement will be funded pursuant to this funding opportunity.

This type of agreement provides for substantial involvement between USDA/FAS and/or other USDA agencies, and the selected applicant in the performance of the project. This may include:

- close monitoring of the successful applicant's performance to verify the results proposed by the applicant;
- collaboration during performance of the scope of work;
- in accordance with 2 CFR 200.317 and 2 CFR 200.318, review of proposed procurement;
- approving qualifications of key personnel (USDA will not select the recipient's employees or contractors; but may disallow costs for specific individuals where required by statute or regulation); and
- review and comment on reports prepared under the cooperative agreement (the final decision on the content of reports rests with the recipient).

4. Application Contents and Format

4.1 Complete Application Package

A complete application package must include:

- [Standard Form SF-424](#), Application for Federal Assistance, showing the Unique Entity ID, and signed by the applicant
- [Standard Form SF-424A](#), Budget Information for Non-Construction Programs, showing the budget categorization. Applicants are advised to consult 2 CFR 200 Subpart E for guidance on proper categorization of cost items. An improper categorization will not itself be grounds

for a determination of ineligibility but may delay approval and/or adversely impact the application's scoring.

- A detailed budget narrative, in which cost items are clearly identified, correspond to the appropriate cost category, and are quantified and described in sufficient detail to enable USDA/FAS to independently determine that the proposed costs are reasonable and allowable for the project and consistent with applicable regulations.
 - If indirect costs are included in the budget, attach a copy of the latest indirect cost rate agreement negotiated with a cognizant federal agency. If a negotiated indirect cost agreement does not exist, please attach a description of the basis for the indirect cost calculation. If electing to utilize the de minimis rate, consistent with 2 CFR 200.414(f), please include a statement of election.
 - Since this award will be incrementally funded, the detailed budget and narrative should reflect a total of up to \$2,200,000 for 4 years with a break down for every year, including up to \$1,000,000 for the first year.
- A detailed project narrative or plan of operation no more than eight (8) pages in length, single spaced. Supplemental documents (resumes/CVs, etc.) are not subject to page limits. The project narrative must describe in plain language:
 - **Technical approach and proposed plan** that includes all categories of activities in the project objectives (See Section 3, Program Description): collection plan, testing plan, data recording, analysis, and submission, including locations, timelines, and partners. The proposed plan must be scientifically-sound, organized, realistic, and efficient to meet the NOFO goal and objectives, resulting in data which meets the Codex CCFO Request for Data requirements.
 - **Technical expertise, capacity, and ability:** Qualified and experienced personnel and qualified laboratories, experience with olive oil testing and production in the United States, understanding of Codex and international standards, which will demonstrate skills and experience to conduct a well-designed activity in support of the objectives outlined in Section 3, Program Description. Resumes/CVs for personnel must be included and are considered supplemental documents.
 - **Programmatic capability and past performance:** Applicants must include their ability to successfully complete and manage the proposed project considering their programmatic capability, appropriate level of expertise, and past performance (see section 4.3).
 - **Professional formatting, spelling, and grammar:** The project narrative must be written in an organized, detailed manner with limited spelling, formatting, and grammatical errors.
- Proof of 501(c)(3) status documentation to support eligibility determination

4.2 Specific Application Formats

While these guidelines establish the minimum type size requirements, applicants are advised that readability is of paramount importance and should take precedence in selection of an appropriate font for use in the application.

Applicants should ensure they are using active, i.e. non-expired, versions of standard forms. The use of an expired standard form will not itself be grounds for a determination of ineligibility but may delay processing of an applicant selected for award.

4.3 Programmatic Capability and Past Performance

Submit a list of federally funded assistance agreements (assistance agreements include Federal grants and cooperative agreements but not Federal contracts) that your organization performed within the last three years (no more than 5 agreements, and preferably USDA or USDA/FAS agreements) and describe:

- (i) whether, and how, you were able to successfully complete and manage those agreements; and
- (ii) your history of meeting the reporting requirements under those agreements including whether you adequately and timely reported on your progress towards achieving the expected outputs and outcomes of those agreements (and if not, explain why not) and whether you submitted acceptable final technical reports under the agreements; and
- (iii) your organizational experience and plan for timely and successfully achieving the objectives of the proposed project, and your staff expertise/qualifications, staff knowledge, and resources or the ability to obtain them, to successfully achieve the goals of the proposed project.

In evaluating applicants under these factors in Section 6, USDA/FAS will consider the information provided by the applicant and may also consider relevant information from other sources, including information from USDA/FAS files and from current/prior grantors (e.g., to verify and/or supplement the information provided by the applicant). If you do not have any relevant or available past performance or past reporting information, please indicate this in the application and you will receive a neutral score for these factors (a neutral score is half of the total points available in a subset of possible points). If you do not provide any response for these items, you may receive a score of 0 for these factors.

4.4 Electronic Signatures

Consistent with the Electronic Signatures in Global and National Commerce Act (ESIGN Act), USDA/FAS uses and accepts electronic signatures for application and award documents. USDA/FAS will neither solicit nor send physical copies of documents.

4.5 Proprietary Information

Applicants should generally refrain from including the details of proprietary information in applications. In cases where, in the applicant's judgement, the inclusion of proprietary information is essential to application review and scoring, the applicant should clearly indicate information it wishes to designate as proprietary.

4.6 Other Application Information

Successful applicants must submit the following information after USDA/FAS notification of our intent to make a Federal award, but prior to a Federal award, if the applicant request for funding or the intended award amount is over \$100,000:

- [Grants.gov Lobbying Form](#)
- [Standard Form SF-LLL](#), Disclosure of Lobbying Activities, if applicable to the applicant

5. Submission Requirements and Deadlines

5.1 Address to Request Application Package

This Notice of Funding Opportunity contains all information required to submit a complete application package.

5.2 Unique Entity ID and System for Award Management (SAM)

Each applicant must:

- (i) Be registered in SAM before submitting its application;
- (ii) Provide a valid unique entity ID in its application; and
- (iii) Continue to maintain an active registration in SAM with current information at all times during which it has an active Federal award or an application or plan under consideration by a Federal agency.

5.3 Submission Instructions

Applications must be submitted through the ezFedGrants system at <https://grants.fms.usda.gov/>

USDA-managed computer systems require applicants to have an identity-proofed account through the login.gov platform, and in some cases may require at least two persons. Identity-proofing and subsequent registration with any USDA-managed computer system may take several days, and applicants who do not already have system access should begin the registration process immediately, even if they are unsure that they will apply to this funding opportunity.

Applicants who require assistance with any USDA-managed computer system must reach out to the agency contact listed in Section 1, Agency Contact Information, prior to the application submission deadline date in Section 5.4, Submission Dates and Times. USDA/FAS strongly encourages applicants reach out at least 5 business days in advance of the application submission deadline to ensure resolution prior to the application submission deadline date. Applicants should provide as much detail as possible to facilitate resolution of the issue. USDA/FAS will make a reasonable effort to resolve the issue, and in rare cases may offer alternative avenues for application submission. If applicants do not contact USDA/FAS prior to the application submission deadline date and submit an application package through an alternative method, their application will be deemed ineligible.

5.4 Submission Dates and Times

Application Submission Deadline: January 13, 2025 at 11:59pm EST (UTC -05:00)
Applications received after this time will NOT be accepted. Applicants are advised to make their submissions 1-2 days before this deadline in case of computer problems.

5.5 Intergovernmental Review

Executive Order 12372, Intergovernmental Review of Federal Programs, may be applicable to awards resulting from this announcement. USDA implemented the Executive Order in 2 CFR 415.5. USDA/FAS may require applicants selected for funding to provide a copy of their application to their State Point of Contact (SPOC) for review. These reviews are not required before submitting an application. Only applicants that USDA/FAS selects for funding under this announcement are subject to the Intergovernmental Review requirement. For more information

about USDA's implementation for Intergovernmental Review, please visit [https://www.usda.gov/ocfo/federal-financial-assistance-policy/intergovernmental-review#:~:text=Executive%20Order%20\(EO\)%2012372%2C,of%20proposed%20Federal%20financial%20assistance](https://www.usda.gov/ocfo/federal-financial-assistance-policy/intergovernmental-review#:~:text=Executive%20Order%20(EO)%2012372%2C,of%20proposed%20Federal%20financial%20assistance).

6. Application Review Information

6.1 Eligibility Threshold Review

USDA/FAS will conduct an eligibility threshold review of all applications submitted to determine that:

- the applicant is eligible, as defined in Section 2, Eligibility; and
- the application was submitted by the application submission deadline date and time as specified in Section 5, Submission Requirements;
- the applicant submitted a complete application, including all required forms and documents as defined in Section 5, Submission Requirements.

An application that does not include all documentation required by this notice of funding opportunity at the time of application will be deemed ineligible.

If an applicant is determined to be ineligible, USDA/FAS will notify the applicant prior to commencing with evaluation of applications, usually within 5 business days of the Application Submission Deadline. An applicant that feels such a determination was made in error may request reconsideration, highlighting evidence supporting their claim, by email to the program officer(s) listed in Section 1, Agency Contact Information, within 3 business days of notification.

Where a page limit is expressed in Section 4 with respect to the application, or parts thereof, pages in excess of the page limitation will not be reviewed. Applicants are advised that readability is of paramount importance and should take precedence in application format, including selecting a legible font type and size for use in the application.

6.2 Review Criteria

Factor 1: Technical approach and feasibility of proposed plan (40 Points)

The applicant will be evaluated on the extent and quality to which they demonstrate a scientifically-sound, organized, realistic, and efficient plan for the proposed activities to implement a sampling and testing plan which meets the NOFO goal to submit the data to Codex, and the extent to which the proposed activities are germane and expected to meet to the objectives described.

- The overall project plan and design of the sampling and testing plan is well designed, organized, realistic, and scientifically sound, covering collecting the samples, storing them, and regularly testing the samples initially and also regularly at three-month intervals for the parameters as outlined in the required study design in Section 3, and outlined in the Codex CCFO Request for Data guidance. It would be expected to meet the specified objectives outlined in Section 3, Project Description, of this NOFO to result in

high quality data which meets the requirements outlined by the Codex EWG guidance. (30 points)

- The applicant's proposal describes a sampling plan which is realistic and representative, and which includes geographical distribution of samples necessary to represent U.S. olive oil production meeting the criteria and states outlined in Section 3, Program Description of this NOFO in the required timeline. (10 points)

Factor 2: Applicant's technical expertise, capacity, and ability (35 Points)

The applicant will be evaluated on the extent and quality to which they demonstrate that they – including subrecipients of funding, if any, and laboratories which will be involved in testing – have the appropriate level of technical expertise and capacity to implement the project described in a credible, effective, and timely manner, including:

- The extent to which the applicant's proposed personnel are qualified and experienced with demonstrated experience conducting all the required tests using the listed protocols required for the Codex CCFO data submission. Qualified personnel are those with demonstrated, successful practical experience implementing similar types of testing and data collection projects on food oils. (10 points)
- The applicant's proposed laboratories included in the plan are experienced and appropriate for conducting these tests. To the extent that the applicant will need to identify additional laboratories or partners to undertake the tests within the allotted time, the applicant should present a clear and reasonable plan of how they will do so. (10 points)
- The applicant's proposal demonstrates a high level of knowledge of the subject area at a technical level, including the various characteristics which are used for evaluating olive oil, and demonstrates experience collaborating with U.S. olive oil producers. (5 points)
- The applicant demonstrates a high level of awareness of the context surrounding data generation activities for submission to Codex and the role of Codex international standards in trade. (5 points)
- The applicant's proposal demonstrates optimal staffing level of technically qualified and experienced personnel to undertake the activities described in their application. Optimal staffing level refers to an adequate number of personnel in place to undertake the activities within the period of performance, at a level appropriate to the complexity of the tasks. To the extent that the applicant will need to identify additional staff or partners to undertake the work within the allotted time, a clear and reasonable plan should demonstrate how their technical capacity will be evaluated and how the partnership will occur. (5 points)

Factor 3: Applicant's programmatic capability and past performance (10 Points)

Under this criterion, applicants will be evaluated based on their ability to successfully complete and manage the proposed project considering their:

- (i) past performance in successfully completing and managing the assistance agreements identified in response to Section 5 of the solicitation,
- (ii) history of meeting the reporting requirements under the assistance agreements identified in response to Section 5 of the solicitation including whether the applicant submitted acceptable final technical reports under those agreements and the extent to which the applicant adequately and timely reported on their progress towards achieving the expected outputs and outcomes under those agreements and if such progress was not being made whether the applicant adequately reported why not,
- (iii) organizational experience and plan for timely and successfully achieving the objectives of the proposed project, and
- (iv) staff expertise/qualifications, staff knowledge, and resources or the ability to obtain them, to successfully achieve the goals of the proposed project.

Note: In evaluating applicants under items i and ii of this criterion, USDA/FAS will consider the information provided by the applicant and may also consider relevant information from other sources including agency files and prior/current grantors (e.g., to verify and/or supplement the information supplied by the applicant). If you do not have any relevant or available past performance or past reporting information, please indicate this in the application and you will receive a neutral score for these subfactors (items i and ii above-a neutral score is half of the total points available in a subset of possible points). If you do not provide any response for these items, you may receive a score of 0 for these factors.

Factor 4: Professional formatting, spelling, and grammar (5 Pts)

The applicant will be evaluated on the extent and quality to which their budget documents are detailed, organized, in-scope, and appropriate including demonstration of professional organization and formatting throughout the project narrative and supporting documents with limited spelling and grammatical errors.

Factor 5: Cost-effectiveness (10 Points)

Applications will be evaluated on the reasonableness, cost-effectiveness, and adequacy of the proposed budget to accomplish the project. The budget will be evaluated on cost savings, where available, and the inclusion of a budget narrative for each line item. For cost effectiveness, the agency will consider “value for money” in its evaluation of the program. This factor does not consider the cost alone, but rather the cost relative to the value for the work to be performed.

6.3 Review and Selection Process

The agency will convene a review panel to review the eligible applications against the evaluation criteria described below. USDA/FAS documents that reviewers, whatever their affiliation, are free from a conflict of interest that would affect their assessment of an applicant, whether positively or negatively.

The reviewers will ensure that the applicant can deliver the programs/activities as described in the announcement based on the applicant's project narrative and assign a score and provide summary comments based on the evaluation criteria identified below. The review panel will make a recommendation list to the selecting official, who is not a member of the panel.

The selecting official may select applications out of rank order in consideration of strategic program priorities, such as geographical distribution, incorporation of minority-serving institutions, or congressional directive. Selection determinations are final and cannot be appealed.

Prior to selection, the agency may contact the highest-ranking applicants to seek clarification and to negotiate technical and programmatic aspects of the application. If an application includes a subaward, USDA/FAS may request to speak with all parties included in the application to ensure sufficient planning and coordination has taken place prior to making an award.

6.4 Risk Review

Prior to making a Federal award, the Federal awarding agency is required by 2 CFR 200.206, [31 USC 3321](#) and [41 USC 2313](#) to review information available through any OMB-designated repositories of government-wide eligibility qualification or financial integrity information. Therefore, application evaluation criteria may include the following risk-based considerations of the applicant: (1) financial stability; (2) quality of management systems and ability to meet management standards; (3) history of performance in managing federal award; (4) reports and findings from audits; and (5) ability to effectively implement statutory, regulatory, or other requirements.

Prior to making a Federal award with a total amount of Federal share greater than the simplified acquisition threshold, currently \$250,000, the federal agency must review and consider any information about the applicant that is in the responsibility/qualification records available in SAM.gov (41 USC 2313).

- An applicant can review and comment on any information in the responsibility/qualification records available in SAM.gov.
- Before making decisions in the risk review required by 2, CFR 200.206, the Federal awarding agency will consider any comments by the applicant along with information available in the responsibility/qualification records in SAM.gov.

7. Award Notices

Applicants will be notified of the status of their application/award by email. Notification to successful applicants is not authorization to proceed, and such notification should be construed as provisional until an award document has been signed by authorized officials of USDA/FAS and the recipient.

Award documents will be transmitted by email to the individuals or offices who submitted them, or to those persons or offices that USDA/FAS believes, to the best of its information, are proper. The applicant is recommended to ensure that the agency is provided with the correct point(s) of contact.

8. Post-Award Requirements and Administration

8.1 Administrative and National Policy Requirements

All successful applicants for all grant and cooperative agreements are required to comply with the applicable General Terms and Conditions, which can be found at https://fas.usda.gov/grants/general_terms_and_conditions. The applicant is presumed to have read, understood, and accepted these terms when accepting a USDA/FAS award. Applicants with questions about the applicable terms should contact the program officer(s) listed in Section 1, Agency Contact Information.

Before accepting an award, the applicant should carefully read all award documents for instructions on administering the award and the terms and conditions associated with responsibilities under Federal Awards. Recipients must accept all conditions in this NOFO as well as any Special Terms and Conditions in the Notice of Award to receive an award under this program.

8.2 Reporting

Financial Reporting

Financial Reports, using form [SF-425](#), Federal Financial Report (FFR), must be submitted semi-annually, within 30 days of the end of the reporting period. A final financial report must be submitted no later than 120 calendar days after the end date of the period of performance.

Performance Reporting

Performance Progress Reports must be submitted semi-annually, within 30 days of the end of the reporting period. A final performance progress report must be submitted no later than 120 calendar days after the end date of the period of performance. The recipient may use any appropriate format for performance progress reports, provided the report includes:

- a) a comparison of actual accomplishments to the established goals for the period;
- b) The reasons why established goals were not met, if appropriate; and
- c) Additional pertinent information including, when appropriate, analysis and explanation of cost overruns or high unit costs.

Recipients are encouraged to include photographs and other supplemental material in performance progress reports.

Financial and Performance reports must be submitted through the ezFedGrants system at <https://grants.fms.usda.gov/>. USDA/FAS may authorize alternative means of submission for recipients who demonstrate a bona fide need.

For awards in which the total lifetime value exceeds \$500,000, additional reporting may be required as described in [Appendix XII to 2 CFR 200](#).

Subaward and Executive Compensation Reporting

Applicants must ensure that they have the necessary processes and systems in place to comply with the subaward and executive total compensation reporting requirements established at [2 CFR 170](#), should they be selected for funding.

Closeout

No later than 120 calendar days after the end date of the period of performance or after an amendment has been issued to close out a USDA/FAS financial assistance agreement, whichever comes first, recipients must submit a final FFR and final progress report detailing all accomplishments and a qualitative summary of the impact of those accomplishments throughout the period of performance. After final reports have been reviewed and approved by the agency, and any residual amount due to the recipient or due to be returned to the agency, the award is subject to closeout. Acceptance of final reports by USDA/FAS constitutes a closeout of the award with no further notice or obligation to either party. This acceptance will indicate the period of performance has expired, and any remaining funds will be deobligated. Records must be retained for a minimum of three years after the final reports are submitted.

8.3 Monitoring

USDA/FAS, through its authorized representatives, has the right, at all reasonable times, to make site visits to review project accomplishments and management control systems and to provide such technical assistance as may be required. During site visits, USDA/FAS will review recipients' files related to the program.

As part of any monitoring and program evaluation activities, recipients must permit USDA/FAS, upon reasonable notice, to review assistance agreement-related records and to interview the organization's staff and other knowledgeable persons regarding the program, and to respond in a timely and accurate manner to agency requests for information relating to the program.

8.4 Conflict of Interest

The Applicant's Conflict of Interest (COI) Point of Contact as defined in USDA/FAS Conflict of Interest Policy must notify the USDA/FAS contact identified in Section 1, Agency Contact Information, of this solicitation of any actual or potential conflict of interest that they are aware of that may provide the Applicant with an unfair competitive advantage in competing for USDA/FAS financial assistance awards within 10 calendar days of becoming aware of the conflict of interest. Examples of an unfair competitive advantage include but are not limited to situations in which an USDA/FAS employee reviewed and commented on or drafted all or part of an applicant's application. Note that USDA/FAS does not generally consider receiving information from an USDA/FAS employee limited to whether the applicant or the applicant's proposed project is eligible to compete for funding to confer an unfair competitive advantage. In addition, assistance agreements made under this solicitation will include a term and condition notifying recipients of their COI disclosure obligations and responsibilities under the award including the need to have systems in place to address, resolve and disclose COIs to USDA/FAS.

8.5 Mandatory Disclosures

As required by [2 CFR 200.113](#), non-federal entities or applicants for a Federal award must disclose, in a timely manner, in writing to the Federal awarding agency or pass-through entity all violations of Federal criminal law involving fraud, bribery, or gratuity violations potentially affecting the Federal award. Failure to make required disclosures can result in any of the remedies described in [2 CFR 200.339](#) including suspension and debarment.

9. Other Information

9.1 Extensions

Extensions to this program may be permitted, subject to approval.

9.2 No Awards

USDA/FAS reserves the right to make no awards under this competition.

9.3 Incremental Funding

These awards will be incrementally funded with a potential cumulative total of \$2,200,000 over the 4-year period of performance. The first year of funding will be up to \$1,000,000. The detailed budget and narrative should reflect a total budget of up to \$2,200,000 for 4 years with a break down for every year, including up to \$1,000,000 for the first year.

All incremental funding will be based on funding availability, satisfactory performance, and other applicable considerations.

9.4 SAM.gov Registration Instructions

Organizations applying to this funding opportunity must have an active SAM.gov registration. If you have never done business with the Federal Government, you will need to register your organization in SAM.gov. If you do not have a SAM.gov account, then you will create an account using login.gov¹ to complete your SAM.gov registration. SAM.gov registration is FREE. The process for entity registrations includes several steps and validations and is not complete until the registration is shown as Active. Please review the [Entity Registration Checklist](#) for details on this process.

If you have done business with the Federal Government previously, you can check your entity status using your government issued UEI to determine if your registration is active. SAM.gov requires you renew your registration every 365 days to keep it active.

Please note that SAM.gov registration is different than obtaining a UEI only. Obtaining an UEI only validates your organization's legal business name and address. Please review the [Frequently Asked Question](#) on the difference for additional details.

Organizations should ensure that their SAM.gov registration includes a current e-Business (EBiz) point of contact name and email address. The EBiz point of contact is critical for Grants.gov Registration and system functionality.

Contact the [Federal Service Desk](#) for help with your SAM.gov account, to resolve technical issues or chat with a help desk agent: (866) 606-8220. The Federal Service desk hours of operation are Monday – Friday 8am – 8pm ET.

9.5 Faith-Based Organizations

(i) Faith-based organizations may apply for an award on the same basis as any other organization, as set forth at, and subject to the protections and requirements of, 7 CFR part 16

¹ Login.gov a secure sign in service used by the public to sign into Federal Agency systems including SAM.gov and Grants.gov. For help with login.gov accounts you should visit <http://login.gov/help>.

and any applicable constitutional and statutory requirements, including 42 U.S.C. 2000bb et seq. USDA/FAS will not, in the selection of recipients, discriminate for or against an organization on the basis of the organization's religious character, motives, or affiliation, or lack thereof, or on the basis of conduct that would not be considered grounds to favor or disfavor a similarly situated secular organization.

(ii) A faith-based organization that participates in this program will retain its independence from the Government and may continue to carry out its mission consistent with religious freedom and conscience protections in Federal law. Religious accommodations may also be sought under many of these religious freedom and conscience protection laws.

(iii) A faith-based organization may not use direct Federal financial assistance from USDA/FAS to support or engage in any explicitly religious activities except when consistent with the Establishment Clause of the First Amendment and any other applicable requirements. An organization receiving Federal financial assistance also may not, in providing services funded by USDA/FAS, or in their outreach activities related to such services, discriminate against a program beneficiary or prospective program beneficiary on the basis of religion, a religious belief, a refusal to hold a religious belief, or a refusal to attend or participate in a religious practice.