

# Meat and Poultry Processing Expansion Program (MPPEP)—Phase 3 Invasive, Wild-Caught Catfish

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**Fiscal Year 2025**

**Notice of Funding Opportunity (NOFO)**

**Funding Opportunity Number:** RD-RBS-25-03-MPPEP

**Publication Date:** August 6, 2025

**Application Due Date:** 11:59 PM Eastern Time on October 6, 2025



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Administrator  
Rural Business-Cooperative Service

## PROGRAM SOLICITATION INFORMATION

**Funding Opportunity Title:** Meat and Poultry Processing Expansion Program - Phase 3 - Invasive, Wild-Caught Catfish

**Funding Opportunity Number:** RD-RBS-25-03-MPPEP

**Announcement Type:** Fiscal Year 2025 Notice of Funding Opportunity (NOFO)

**Assistance Listing Number:** 10.381

**Submission Deadline:** Applications must be received by 11:59 pm Eastern Time on October 6, 2025, through [Grants.gov](https://www.grants.gov). Applications received after this deadline will not be considered for evaluation or funding.

**Executive Summary:** The U.S. Department of Agriculture (USDA), Rural Development (RD) Rural Business-Cooperative Service (RBCS or Agency), requests applications for the Meat and Poultry Processing Expansion Program (MPPEP) - Phase 3 - Invasive, Wild-Caught Catfish. MPPEP is authorized under Section 1001(b)(4) of the American Rescue Plan Act (ARPA), which provides funding to make “loans and grants and provide other assistance to maintain and improve food and agricultural supply chain resiliency.” Funding in the aggregate amount of \$6 million is being made available as authorized by Section 755 of the Consolidated Appropriations Act, 2024 (Public Law No. 118-42), and Section 1101 of the Full-Year Continuing Appropriations and Extensions Act, 2025 (Public Law No. 119-4).

Pursuant to this authority, USDA is making competitive grant funding for purchase of equipment, including improvements, upgrades, renovations or retrofits to an existing Facility, needed to install the equipment to increase processing capacity of invasive, Wild-Caught catfish and overall volume of Processing. This will not only scale capacity and efficiency at Processing facilities, but also help to reduce Invasive Species populations that are decimating marine ecosystems and threatening the economy of the fishing industry.

Eligible applicants include for-profit and nonprofit entities, producer-owned Cooperatives and corporations, certified benefit corporations, Tribes and Tribal Entities, State or local government entities, and other business types (regardless of legal structure). Private entities must be Independently Owned and Operated, and all entities must be Domestically Owned. Additionally, the applicants’ Processing facilities must be physically located and operating in the United States (U.S.) or its territories.

Applicants must also:

- (1) Currently process seafood or Wild-Caught catfish for commercial markets and been in business

for more than one year,

- (2) Operate or plan to operate under a Food Safety and Inspection Service (FSIS) grant of inspection from USDA to process invasive, Wild-Caught catfish subject to the Federal Meat Inspection Act (FMIA),
- (3) Plan to increase processing capacity for invasive, Wild-Caught catfish, at their existing Facility, and
- (4) Have a State Aquatic Nuisance Species, or Invasive Species, management plan that specifically identifies catfish as an Invasive or Aquatic Nuisance Species in the State where the Facility operates.

The maximum award is \$1 million or 50 percent of total project costs, whichever is less. The minimum award is \$250,000. A cost share of 50 percent of the total project cost is required. Applicants will be required to identify sources and amounts that will make up the 50 percent cost share in the application.

The Agency may also consider geography, species, business model, and environmental impacts to maximize diversity among awards.

This NOFO provides eligibility criteria for applicants and projects, details on cost share requirements, and the forms and instructions required to apply for an award.

USDA is offering technical assistance to help applicants prepare grant applications. Please see Section 2.6 for more information.

## APPLICATION CHECKLIST

The application must include all the information in the checklist located below. Failure to submit all required information with an application will result in the application being ineligible for the grant Program. Please see Section 4.2 for more information and details on the required documents and supporting information.

Document	Details
<input type="checkbox"/> SF-424, Application for Federal Assistance	Maximum period of performance is 24 months
<input type="checkbox"/> SF-424A, Budget Form – Non-Construction Programs	Budget Information – Non-Construction Programs

Document	Details
<input type="checkbox"/> SF-424B, Assurances for Non-Construction Programs	Assurances for Non-Construction Projects
<input type="checkbox"/> AD-2106 – Form to Assist in Assessment of USDA Compliance with Civil Rights Laws	Voluntary; not required
<input type="checkbox"/> Project Narrative Application	Grant Purpose and Project Details. Narrative is limited to 20 pages, not including application template and Supporting Documents.
<input type="checkbox"/> Environmental Information	Environmental checklist, or information covered in the checklist
<input type="checkbox"/> Business Plan	Business Plan including rationale for proposed project
<input type="checkbox"/> Financial Documents	Income Statement, Balance Sheets and Cash Flow Projections for the Facility
<input type="checkbox"/> Resumes	Resumes of key personnel
<input type="checkbox"/> Letters of Support	Evidence of community support for the project
<input type="checkbox"/> Tribal Resolution of Consent – if applicable	For projects on Tribal lands

## TIPS FOR APPLICANTS

- To do business with the Federal Government and to submit your application electronically using [Grants.gov](https://www.grants.gov), you must —
  - Have a Unique Entity Identifier (UEI) and a Taxpayer Identification Number (TIN);
  - Be registered in [SAM.gov](https://www.sam.gov) (System for Award Management), the Government's primary registrant database;
  - Provide your UEI number and TIN on your application; and
  - Maintain an active SAM registration with current information throughout the application review period and, if you are awarded a grant, throughout the life of the award.
- Register and submit applications early. **DO NOT WAIT UNTIL THE DAY OF THE APPLICATION DEADLINE.**
- Thoroughly read this NOFO and follow all the instructions.
- Thoroughly review the guidelines and policies as outlined in this NOFO to ensure the application is received and eligible for consideration, and to understand allowable and unallowable costs.

Apply for the correct grant Program (Assistance Listing number “**10.381**” and Funding Opportunity Number “**USDA- RD-RBS-25-03-MPPEP**”).

- Make sure you have the most recent copy of Adobe Reader installed on your computer and that it is compatible with [Grants.gov](https://www.grants.gov) software. Grants.gov supports Adobe Reader version 9.0.0 and higher.
- Limit Application File Name Characters (50 or fewer).
- When uploading attachments, click the “Add Attachments” button (do NOT use the “paperclip” icon in Adobe Reader). Acceptable file types include .pdf, .doc, .docx, .xls, .xlsx.
- Do not password-protect your documents and make sure all tracked-changes are “accepted”.
- Avoid Special Characters in File Names (\$, %, &, \*, Spanish "ñ", etc.).
- Input the correct UEI number on the SF-424 cover page.
- Review the Grants.gov Applicant User and Registration Guides:
  - [grants.gov/applicants/applicant-faqs](https://www.grants.gov/applicants/applicant-faqs)
  - [grants.gov/applicants/workspace-overview](https://www.grants.gov/applicants/workspace-overview)

Timing to Obtain and Submit Grants.gov Required Elements	
Required Action	Timing to Obtain/Submit
<input type="checkbox"/> Submitting Application. The RBCS deadline to receive all applications and supporting materials through <a href="https://www.grants.gov">Grants.gov</a>	October 6, 2025, by 11:59 pm Eastern Time
<input type="checkbox"/> Obtaining your organization’s UEI number (if you do not already have one).	7 - 10 Business Days
<input type="checkbox"/> Establishing an active <a href="https://sam.gov">SAM.gov</a> account (if you do not already have one).	7 - 10 Business Days
<input type="checkbox"/> Obtaining a TIN/EIN (if you do not already have one).	Up to 2 weeks
<input type="checkbox"/> Creating your <a href="https://www.grants.gov">Grants.gov</a> profile.	Up to 2 weeks

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## 1.0 FUNDING OPPORTUNITY DESCRIPTION

### 1.1 LEGISLATIVE AUTHORITY

The MPPEP is authorized by Section 1001(b)(4) of the American Rescue Plan Act (ARPA) ([Pub. L. No. 117-2](#)). This section provides funding “to make loans and grants and provide other assistance to maintain and improve food and agricultural supply chain resiliency.” Funding specifically for MPPEP- 3 - Invasive, Wild-Caught Catfish in the aggregate amount of \$6 million is being made available as authorized by Section 755 of the Consolidated Appropriations Act, 2024, (Public Law No. 118-42), and Section 1101 of the Full-Year Continuing Appropriations and Extensions Act, 2025 (Public Law No. 119-4). The MPPEP grants are administered by RD’s RBCS.

### 1.2 PURPOSE

The primary purpose of MPPEP has been to provide new, better and more Processing options to Meat and poultry producers, in the applicant’s market. It has been part of the broader USDA initiative to improve food and agricultural supply chain resiliency. The goal for this NOFO is to specifically support Processors of invasive, Wild-Caught catfish species by increasing Processing capacity and providing greater opportunity in this sector. Strategies that can fulfill the goal of the NOFO and ensure lasting impacts include projects to increase Processing capacity; increase Processing volume; elevate incomes for both fishers and Processors; and to provide fair wages, and new, stable and safe job opportunities at Processing facilities to keep profits circulating in rural communities.

USDA is interested in supporting MPPEP projects that are technically feasible, financially viable, and have already identified other sources of funding (e.g., Federal, State, Tribe or intertribal, local funding, or private funding) to complete projects.

### 1.3 PROJECT ACTIVITIES ELIGIBLE FOR FUNDING

Grant funds must be used for the purchase of equipment, including improvements, upgrades, renovations or retrofits to an existing Facility needed to install the equipment, that will be used to increase Processing capacity of invasive, Wild-Caught catfish and overall volume of Processing.

The applicant is responsible for defining the MPPEP project which is limited to activities and costs associated with increasing Processing capacity. MPPEP grant funds may only support costs incurred during the period of performance of the award. The period of performance starts when a Financial Assistance Agreement, Form RD 4280-2, between the applicant and RBCS is executed. The maximum period of performance is 24 months. When defining your project, you should consider what expenses you will be incurring after September 30, 2025, the anticipated award date.



Eligible activities include, but are not limited to:

- Purchasing or upgrading Processing and manufacturing equipment (including cutting, skinning, de-scaling, and de-boning equipment, mixers, grinders, pipes, motors, pumps, and valves);
- Developing, customizing, and installing equipment, devices, and technology that automates Processing functions to improve worker conditions and safety;
- Upgrading equipment to ensure food safety;
- Developing, customizing, and installing equipment that reduces emissions, increases efficient water use, and improves air and/or water quality to help lower operating costs at the Facility;
- Purchasing or upgrading composting equipment;
- Purchasing or upgrading packaging and labeling equipment;
- Making internal or minimal external improvements, upgrades, renovations or retrofits to an existing Facility needed to install the equipment;
- Ensuring compliance with occupational and other safety requirements under applicable law; including revising existing Hazard Analysis and Critical Control Points (HACCP) plans to include catfish; and
- Paying staffing or operational costs, including training specifically tied to implementing the proposed project.

#### 1.4 PROJECT ACTIVITIES NOT ELIGIBLE FOR FUNDING

All RBCS awards are subject to the terms and conditions, cost principles, and other considerations described in the Financial Assistance Agreement, Form RD 4280-2. In addition, MPPEP grant funds may not be used for:

- Purchase or lease of land, or purchase of facilities that are either currently in operation or inoperable.
- New Facility construction or expansion of existing facilities that would increase the footprint of the Facility and require breaking ground during construction.
- Purchase of personal or other vehicles.
- Solely supporting Further Processing activities that do not include expanding Primary

Processing capacity at the applicant's Facility.

- Projects that fund routine maintenance and repair of an organization's buildings and operational facilities.
- Paying for costs and activities that only support existing Processing capacity.
- Paying for technical assistance to support the Facility or the proposed project.
- Project planning, feasibility study expenses or research and development.
- Expenses or activities that have been or will be reimbursed under any federal, State, or local government funding.
- Paying for costs incurred prior to the date the Financial Assistance Agreement, Form RD 4280-2, is executed. Reimbursement for eligible expenses incurred 90 days prior to award may be allowed with Agency approval.
- Paying for indirect project costs.
- Subawards.
- Paying for costs that have been or will be reimbursed by a third party.
- Paying for costs that support or oppose union organizing.
- Support of an application (project) that has a proposed period of performance longer than 24 months.
- Support of an application (project) that has a grant request exceeding \$1 million or exceeding 50 percent of total project costs, whichever is less.

Applicants that have questions concerning the allowability of costs after reviewing this section should contact RD staff using the contact information listed under Section 7.0 Agency Contacts.

## 1.5 NATIONAL ENVIRONMENTAL POLICY ACT (NEPA)

All activities funded under this NOFO must comply with the National Environmental Policy Act (NEPA) and related applicable Agency regulations at [7 CFR part 1970](#) and related instructions, Section 106 of the National Historic Preservation Act (NHPA), other applicable Federal laws and regulations, and any applicable State, local, or Tribal laws or regulations.

The Agency will review each grant application to determine its compliance with [7 CFR part 1970](#). Activities such as purchase of equipment, including improvements, upgrades, renovations or retrofits to

install it in an existing Facility are generally classified as a Categorical Exclusion pursuant to [7 CFR 1970.53](#), and usually do not require any additional documentation. However, the Agency may request additional information from the applicant for the purposes of completing the environmental review.

## 1.6 BUILD AMERICA, BUY AMERICA ACT (BABAA)

Awardees that are Non-Federal Entities, defined by [2 CFR 200.1](#) as any State, local government, Indian Tribe, Institution of Higher Education, or nonprofit organization, shall be governed by the requirements of Section 70914 of the Build America, Buy America Act (BABAA) within the Infrastructure Investment and Jobs Act (IIJA) (Public Law 117-58), and its implementing regulations at [2 CFR part 184](#). Any request for waiver of these requirements must be submitted pursuant to USDA's guidance available online at [usda.gov/ocfo/federal-financial-assistancepolicy/USDABuyAmericaWaiver](https://usda.gov/ocfo/federal-financial-assistancepolicy/USDABuyAmericaWaiver).

## 2.0 AWARD INFORMATION

### 2.1 TYPE OF FEDERAL ASSISTANCE

MPPEP provides grants to help eligible processors expand their processing capacity, which create new, better and more processing options for meat and poultry producers. RBCS will use a Financial Assistance Agreement, Form RD 4280-2, to provide a Federal award to successful applicants.

### 2.2 AVAILABLE FUNDING AND AWARD SIZE

Approximately \$6 million is available to fund projects. The maximum award amount is \$1 million or 50 percent of the total project costs, whichever is less. The minimum award is \$250,000. A cost share of 50 percent of the total project cost is required. Applicants will be required to identify sources and amounts that will make up the 50 percent cost share in the application. USDA does not guarantee minimum funding levels or a specific number of awards. Partial awards may be offered by the Agency. If partial awards are offered, a new Work Plan and budget will be negotiated for final total project costs.

### 2.3 FEDERAL AWARD PERIOD OF PERFORMANCE

The maximum period of performance for this grant is 24 months.

### 2.4 ELIGIBLE APPLICANTS

Eligible applicants include Tribes and Tribal Entities, for-profit and nonprofit entities, corporations, producer-owned Cooperatives and corporations, certified benefit corporations, State or local government entities, and other entities (regardless of legal structure). Applicants must:

- (1) Currently process seafood or Wild-Caught catfish for commercial markets and have been in business for more than one year,

- (2) Operate or plan to operate under a grant of inspection from USDA to process invasive, Wild-
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Caught catfish subject to the FMIA,

- (3) Plan to increase Processing capacity for invasive, Wild-Caught catfish, at their existing Facility and
- (4) Have a State Aquatic Nuisance Species or Invasive Species management plan that includes catfish.

Private entities must be Independently Owned and Operated. All entities must be Domestically Owned, and their Processing facilities must be physically located and operated within the U.S. or its territories. There is no rural area requirement for the Program.

Applicants that engage or propose to engage in Further Processing may be eligible provided that the project increases demand for invasive, Wild-Caught catfish and improves the viability of an existing Processing operation. Additionally, the inputs for Further Processing must include the products of Primary Processing by the applicant.

Eligible applicants must be registered in the System for Award Management (SAM) at time of application and must maintain annual SAM registration while an application is active and through the term of an award. Please refer to Section 4.6.1 for instructions on how to register your entity in the SAM.

## 2.5 APPLICANTS NOT ELIGIBLE FOR FUNDING

Applicants are not eligible for MPPEP funding if they:

- Do not currently, or do not plan to, process invasive, Wild-Caught catfish under a Federal Grant of Inspection.
- Do not have a State Aquatic Nuisance Species or Invasive Species management plan that includes catfish.
- Propose to, or engage in, Further Processing that does not expand Primary Processing capacity of invasive, Wild-Caught catfish at the applicant's Facility.
- Submit multiple applications from separate applicant entities with identical or greater than 75 percent common ownership, or from a parent, subsidiary, or affiliated organization (with "affiliation" defined by Small Business Administration regulation [13 CFR 121.103](#), or successor regulation).
- Have facilities that are exclusively for non-commercial use.

## 2.6 TECHNICAL ASSISTANCE & RESOURCES

RBCS provides resources and information on its website ([rd.usda.gov/programs-services/business-programs/meat-and-poultry-processing-expansion-program](https://rd.usda.gov/programs-services/business-programs/meat-and-poultry-processing-expansion-program)) that may be helpful to applicants, including Frequently Asked Questions (FAQ's), required application forms and Agency contact information. RBCS staff is available to provide timely responses to questions emailed to [mppep@usda.gov](mailto:mppep@usda.gov).

## 3.0 FUNDING CONSIDERATIONS

### 3.1 COST SHARING

The applicant is required to cost share at least 50 percent of the total project cost. Evidence of the cost share percentage will be verified by the Agency at the time of award. If the applicant cannot verify cost share within the time frame specified in the letter of conditions for the award, the Agency may offer funding to the next highest ranked project.

The applicant is responsible for defining the total project costs of the MPPEP expansion project. Financial contributions must support expanding Processing capacity as described in the application. Costs and activities that support existing Processing capacity are not eligible. In-kind donations cannot be used to meet the cost sharing requirement. If Program income is expected during the period as result of Project activities, it is subject to the requirements of [2 CFR 200.307](#) and must be managed and reported accordingly. Program Income will be documented at time of award.

Expenses must be incurred between the date of execution of the Financial Assistance Agreement, Form RD 4280-2, and the end date of the Period of Performance, or 24 months, whichever is earlier.

## 4.0 APPLICATION AND SUBMISSION INFORMATION

### 4.1 ELECTRONIC APPLICATION PACKAGE

Only electronic applications may be submitted via [Grants.gov](https://grants.gov) in response to this NOFO. We urge applicants to submit applications early to the Grants.gov system. For an overview of the Grants.gov application process, see the Grants.gov How to Apply for Grants webpage found at [grants.gov/applicants/grant-applications/how-to-apply-for-grants](https://grants.gov/applicants/grant-applications/how-to-apply-for-grants). This NOFO contains the information needed to obtain and complete required application forms and RD-specific attachments.

Applications must be submitted via [Grants.gov](https://grants.gov). Applicants should submit applications well before the deadline to avoid last minute technical issues. See Section 4.6 Grants.gov Application Submission and Receipt Procedures and Requirements for additional application instructions.

Applicants can find the opportunity under either the Assistance Listing number 10.381 or the Funding

## 4.2 APPLICATION REQUIREMENTS

### 4.2.1 REQUIRED FORMS

- (1) Form SF 424, Application for Federal Assistance
- (2) Form SF 424A, Budget Information- Non-Construction Programs
- (3) Form SF 424B, Assurances - Non-Construction Programs
- (4) Form AD-2106, Questionnaire to Assist in the Assessment of USDA Compliance with Civil Rights Laws. Submission of this form is optional.

### 4.2.2 PROJECT NARRATIVE & SUPPORTING DOCUMENTS

*Required.* Applicants are required to prepare and submit a project narrative and are encouraged to use the provided Application Template available at [rd.usda.gov/programs-services/business-programs/meat-and-poultry-processing-expansion-program](https://rd.usda.gov/programs-services/business-programs/meat-and-poultry-processing-expansion-program). Applicants are not required to use the template, but they are required to answer all the questions contained in the template.

The project narrative and all supporting documents must be submitted as one of the following file types: .pdf, .doc, .docx, .xls, .xlsx. and attached to the Grants.gov application package. Handwritten applications will not be accepted.

The project narrative must be typed, single-spaced, and in an 11-point font, not to exceed twenty (20) 8.5 x 11” pages, not including the Application Template or supporting documents, as listed in Section 4.2.2(1)-(2). For example, if the application template is 15 pages before you begin entering your project narrative information, your application may be up to 35 pages in length when completed (15 page application template + 20 pages of applicant content).

Prior to submitting an application to Grants.gov, make sure that it is in final form (e.g., if the “track changes” function was used, accept all changes before submitting so that the mark-up is not visible in the submitted application).

The forms, financials and all supporting documents in the subsequent sections do not count against the 20-page limit for the project narrative.

- (1) *Application Template.* Applicants are encouraged to use the provided Application Template located at [rd.usda.gov/programs-services/business-programs/meat-and-poultry-processing-expansion-program](https://rd.usda.gov/programs-services/business-programs/meat-and-poultry-processing-expansion-program) for the project narrative, to ensure all the following topics are addressed.

Sections in the template include:

- (a) *Applicant and Project information.* Provide applicant, project, and Facility information as described in the Application Template. Please refer to Section 2.4 for a description of eligible applicants.
- (b) *Project Information and Executive Summary.* Provide a summary detailing project goals and objectives in 500 words or fewer.
- (c) *Land Ownership and Access.* Applicants must describe who owns and controls or has access to the land where the project is located.
- (d) *Performance Metrics.* Applicants must track progress towards goals to demonstrate success. Applicants must provide baseline data for the following metrics:
  - (i) Processing volume increased (number of pounds or tons at the Facility).
  - (ii) New Value-Added products developed by the Facility.
  - (iii) Increase in number of fishers and/or vessels served by the Facility.
  - (iv) Number of new sales channels accessed by the Facility.
  - (v) Number of jobs created and retained at the Facility.
- (e) *Merit Evaluation.* The application must be responsive to each evaluation criterion in Section 5.1. Your proposal should identify how your project will provide more Processing capacity and increase overall Processing volume in your market, create more Processing opportunities for fishers and is supported by community stakeholders. Applicants must describe their proposed project and how the Processing Facility will achieve financial viability, technical merit and achievability and address sourcing strategy, labor standards, and marine and community impacts.

Applicants must provide a Work Plan and budget that includes all key staff and activities performed within the proposed Period of Performance by task, associated costs, and proposed timeframe for completion. Please provide sufficient detail to allow the Agency to determine project eligibility, including all other funding that is needed to complete the project. Refer to Section 1.3 for a list of project activities eligible for funding. Project activities not eligible for funding are listed in Section 1.4.

Applicants should note that while a **letter of support** from a community leader is not required for a Complete Application, it is required for the application to receive points in the

Community Impact & Support Section 5.1.7 below. Letters of support must be submitted with the application in Grants.gov to be considered.

- (f) *Tribal Resolution of Consent.* For a project located on Tribal Lands where the applicant is not a member of the Tribe nor an entity owned or operated by that Tribe, a Tribe's Resolution of Consent must be provided. Other documentation such as a Letter of Support from the Tribal Council for the governing body of the Tribe with jurisdiction over the Tribal Lands where the project is located (if applicable) is also an acceptable acknowledgement of Tribal consent. Any applicant that fails to provide a Tribal Resolution or Letter of Consent from the Tribe will not be considered for funding.

- (2) *Other Supporting Information.* Applicants are required to submit the following supporting information. Please refer to the Tips for Applicants section for a list of acceptable file types.

- (a) *Business Plan.* Provide a plan that includes the business goals and objectives, market analysis, and the rationale for the proposed project.

- (b) *Financial Documents.* Provide the following to assist the Agency in determining financial viability of the project:

- (i) Three years of historical balance sheet and income statements. Applicants with fewer than three years of data should submit what is available, which may include but is not limited to balance sheets, income statements, and other related documentation to demonstrate the financial viability of the venture.
- (ii) Current balance sheet and income statements (within 90 days of application).
- (iii) Two years of proforma and projected financial analysis including but not limited to (A) balance sheet, (B) income statement, and (C) cash flow analysis. Include financial projections with assumptions used in development of projections.

- (c) *Resumes.* Provide resumes of key personnel at the Facility and on the management team for the proposed project.

- (3) *Applicant certifications.* By signing and submitting the SF-424, Application for Federal Assistance, as a part of the grant application package, applicants are certifying that they agree to the following statements:

- (a) The applicant does not have a known relationship or association with an Agency employee. If there is a known relationship, the applicant must identify each Agency



employee with whom the applicant has a known relationship.

- (b) The applicant is a legal entity in good standing and operating in accordance with the laws of the State(s) or Tribe(s) where the applicant has a place of business, including child labor laws.
- (c) The applicant has not been found or may be found to be unfit to obtain a grant of Federal or State equivalent inspection because of convictions, in a Federal or State court, of a felony, or multiple misdemeanors involving the acquisition, handling, or distribution of adulterated or misbranded Meat or fraud in connection with transactions in food, or other factors.
- (d) The applicant who receives an award must comply with FSIS standards and must possess or plan to obtain a Federal Grant of Inspection during the period of performance for the MPPEP grant. In addition, if inspection services have been suspended in the past five years, the applicant must disclose the reasons for the suspension and how the action was resolved.
- (e) The applicant has disclosed all of its violations of Federal and state health, safety and labor laws, regulations and standards that occurred up to 5 years prior to the date of the application, including any remedial actions that have been taken by the applicant to rectify such violations, and whether the applicant is currently in compliance with such laws, regulations and standards.
- (f) The applicant has developed a HACCP plan or will revise a HACCP plan to include invasive, Wild-Caught catfish.
- (g) The applicant has the necessary certifications in place to ensure regulatory compliance with all food safety measures providing safe products to consumers.
- (h) The State where the Processing Facility is located has a State Aquatic Nuisance Species or Invasive Species management plan that includes catfish.
- (i) Any equipment required for the project is available, can be procured and delivered within the proposed project development schedule, barring any unforeseen supply chain disruptions to availability, and will be installed in conformance with manufacturer's specifications and design requirements.
- (j) The applicant has identified the balance of funding necessary (50 percent of total project costs) to complete the project in accordance with the timeline and budget

proposed in its MPPEP application. Evidence of cost share will be verified at the time of award.

- (k) The project will be constructed in accordance with applicable laws, regulations, agreements, permits, codes, and standards.
- (l) The applicant entity has an active entity registration in the System for Award Management; has not been debarred or suspended from participating in USDA covered transactions; is not listed on the Credit Alert Verification Reporting System; and is not listed on the Treasury Offset Program;
- (m) The applicant entity principals have not been debarred or suspended from participating in USDA covered transactions; and
- (n) The applicant is responsible for resolving any issues that are reported in the Do Not Pay System. If issues are not resolved by the time the Agency makes Program awards, the Agency may proceed to award funds to other eligible applicants.

#### 4.3 SUBMITTED APPLICATION QUALIFICATION

Your application will **not be reviewed or be considered for funding** if it is:

- Received after the application submission deadline.
- Submitted via any method other than through [Grants.gov](https://www.Grants.gov).
- Submitted to the wrong grant program.
- Not responsive to the requirements of this NOFO (eligibility, incomplete application, not providing all required documents, etc. as required in Section 4.2).

#### 4.4 SUBMISSION DATE AND TIME

Applications must be submitted electronically through [Grants.gov](https://www.Grants.gov). Ensure that all components of the application are complete before submission. Allow enough time for the application process as it may take more than one attempt before your application is successfully submitted. RBCS encourages you to submit your application at least two weeks prior to the application deadline to ensure all certifications and registrations are met.

Only applications submitted and validated by 11:59 p.m. Eastern Time on October 6, 2025, on [Grants.gov](https://www.Grants.gov) will be accepted.

## 4.5 INTERGOVERNMENTAL REVIEW

Intergovernmental Review under Executive Order 12372 is not required in this Program.

## 4.6 GRANTS.GOV APPLICATION SUBMISSION AND RECEIPT PROCEDURES AND REQUIREMENTS

### 4.6.1 HOW TO REGISTER TO APPLY THROUGH GRANTS.GOV

The registration process can take **up to four weeks** to complete. Therefore, complete your registration allowing sufficient time to ensure it does not impact your ability to meet required application submission deadlines.

Instructions for entities interested in applying for this grant funding opportunity can be found here: [grants.gov/applicants/applicant-registration](https://grants.gov/applicants/applicant-registration). If further assistance is needed, MPPTA providers can assist, please see Section 2.6 for details.

- (1) *Obtain a UEI.* All entities applying for funding, including renewal funding, must have a UEI from SAM.gov. Instructions for obtaining the UEI are available at [sam.gov/content/entity-registration](https://sam.gov/content/entity-registration). Applicants must enter the UEI number in the data entry field labeled "UEI" on the SF-424 form.
- (2) *Register with the SAM.* In addition to having a UEI number, entities applying online through [Grants.gov](https://Grants.gov) must register with [SAM.gov](https://SAM.gov). Each current SAM.gov registrant has already been assigned a UEI number and can view it within [SAM.gov](https://SAM.gov). All organizations must register with SAM.gov to apply for a grant. Failure to register with the SAM.gov will prevent your organization from applying through Grants.gov. SAM.gov accounts must be updated annually, and your organization must have an active SAM.gov account to submit your application to Grants.gov.
- (3) *Create a Grants.gov Account.* The next step in the registration process is to create an account with [Grants.gov](https://Grants.gov). Applicants must know their organization's UEI number to complete this process. Completing this process automatically triggers an email request for applicant roles to the entity's E-Business Point of Contact (EBiz POC) for review. The EBiz POC is a representative from your organization who is the contact listed for SAM.gov. To apply for grants on behalf of your organization, you will need designation as the Authorized Organization Role (AOR).
- (4) *Authorize Grants.gov Roles.* After creating an account on Grants.gov, the EBiz POC receives an email notifying him or her of your registration and request for roles. The EBiz POC will then log in to [Grants.gov](https://Grants.gov) and authorize the appropriate roles, including the AOR role, thereby giving you permission to complete and submit applications on behalf of the organization. You will be able to submit your application online any time after you have been approved as an AOR.

- (5) *Track Role Status.* After registering with Grants.gov and authorizing the applicant AOR, Grants.gov allows you to track your status.
- (6) *Electronic Signature.* When applications are submitted through Grants.gov, the name of the entity's AOR who submitted the application is inserted into the signature line of the application, serving as the electronic signature. The EBiz POC must authorize individuals who are able to make legally binding commitments on behalf of the organization to act as an AOR; **this step is often missed, and it is crucial for valid and timely submissions.**

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#### 4.6.2 HOW TO SUBMIT AN APPLICATION TO RBCS VIA GRANTS.GOV

Applicants may use the [grants.gov/applicants/workspace-overview.html](https://grants.gov/applicants/workspace-overview.html), a shared, online environment where members of a grant team may simultaneously access and edit different webforms within an application. For each funding opportunity announcement, an applicant creates a new project workspace.

- (1) *Create a Workspace.* This allows you to complete your Workspace online and route it through your organization for review before submitting.
- (2) *Complete a Workspace.* Add participants to the workspace, complete all the required forms, and check for errors before submission.
  - (a) *Adobe Reader.* If you decide not to apply by filling out the webforms you can download individual PDF forms in Workspace so that they will appear similar to other Standard or RD forms. The individual PDF forms can be downloaded and saved to your local storage device, network drive(s), or external drives, then accessed through Adobe Reader.

NOTE. You may need to visit the Adobe Software Compatibility page on Grants.gov at [grants.gov/applicants/adobe-software-compatibility](https://grants.gov/applicants/adobe-software-compatibility) to download the appropriate version of the software. There is no cost for Adobe Reader Software.
  - (b) *Mandatory Fields in Forms.* Fields marked with an asterisk and a different background color are mandatory fields you must complete to successfully submit your application.
  - (c) *Complete SF-424 Fields First.* The forms are designed to fill in common required fields across other forms, such as the applicant's name, address, and UEI number. To trigger this feature, an applicant must complete the SF-424 information first. Once it is completed, the information will transfer to the other forms.

- (3) *Submit a Workspace.* Submit your application through Workspace by clicking the Sign and

Submit button on the Manage Workspace page, under the Forms tab. Grants.gov recommends submitting your application package **at least 24-48 hours prior to the application deadline** to provide you with time to correct any potential technical issues that may prevent application submission.

SPECIAL NOTE. Grants.gov **does not** check for RBCS's required attachments. It is the applicant's responsibility to ensure that all required attachments listed in Section 4.2 are included.

- (4) *Track a Workspace.* After successfully submitting a workspace package, Grants.gov automatically assigns a Tracking Number (GRANTXXXXXXX) to the package, which will be listed on the Confirmation page generated after submission.
- (5) *Applicant Support.* Additional training and support can be found on the Grants.gov website at [grants.gov/applicants/applicant-training](https://grants.gov/applicants/applicant-training). Applicants may also call the 24/7 toll-free support number 1-800-518-4726, or email [support@grants.gov](mailto:support@grants.gov). Grants.gov will issue a ticket number to which you and Grants.gov can refer to if the issue is not resolved. For questions related to the specific grant opportunity, refer to section 7.0 Agency Contacts.

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#### 4.6.3 TIMELY RECEIPT REQUIREMENTS AND PROOF OF TIMELY SUBMISSION

All applications must be received by the due date established in Section 4.4. Submission Date and Time. Proof of timely submission is automatically recorded by Grants.gov using an electronic date/time stamp generated when the application is successfully received by Grants.gov. The applicant AOR will then receive an acknowledgement of receipt and a tracking number (GRANTXXXXXXX) from Grants.gov. Applicant AORs will also receive the official date/time stamp and Grants.gov tracking number in an email serving as proof of their timely submission.

When RBCS successfully retrieves the application from Grants.gov, and acknowledges the download of submissions, Grants.gov will electronically acknowledge receipt of the application to the applicant AOR's email address. Applications will be deemed to have been received at the date and time that Grants.gov receives your application.

RBCS will not accept application packages by fax, email, or postal mail. Applications received after the established due date for the Program will be considered late and will not be considered for funding by RBCS. Supplemental information will not be accepted as part of the application package for competitive review after the application deadline.

SPECIAL NOTE FOR APPLICANTS WITH SLOW INTERNET CONNECTIONS. Applicants using slow

internet, such as dial-up connections, may experience significantly longer transmission times when submitting applications via Grants.gov, especially if there are large attachments contained in the upload. Grants.gov will provide either an error message or a successfully received transmission notification via email to the applicant AOR.

## 5.0 APPLICATION REVIEW INFORMATION

### 5.1 MERIT EVALUATION CRITERIA

Every complete and eligible application will be evaluated based on the scoring criteria below.

Discretionary points may be added to the total score to generate the final score. The most competitive applications will describe project objectives that align with the NOFO goals as described under Section 1.2 and that are specific to the applicant's project, market, and community. Failure to address all or part of a criterion, or to insufficiently communicate relevant project information, will result in a lower score.

Notwithstanding the high score of an application, the Agency reserves the right not to make an award to an applicant if the applicant's health, safety or labor law violations are deemed unsatisfactory, as determined by the Agency.

The maximum number of points for the core categories is 115 points.

*(1) Alignment and Intent, Up to 10 Points.*

- (a) The application identifies specific constraints or challenges in Processing invasive, Wild-Caught catfish, and describes the project's objectives, including how they will address those issues.
- (b) The application describes the steps the applicant will take at the Facility to increase Processing capacity and create more opportunities in the sector through higher volumes and other Value-Added activities (if applicable).
- (c) The application describes the project's proposed geographic focus area, and the regional market demand versus Processing constraints.
- (d) The application identifies the estimated numbers of fishers that will benefit from increased Processing capacity.
- (e) The application complies with all written instructions and requirements described within the NOFO and Project Narrative Template.

*(2) Market Impact & Opportunities, Up to 20 points.*

- (a) *Animal Procurement.* Application describes a clear plan for procuring invasive, Wild-Caught

catfish and providing more opportunities for fishers relative to the existing Processing opportunities in their geographic area, including but not limited to:

- (i) The increase in Processing volume that results in procurement of more invasive Wild-Caught catfish from fishers.
- (ii) The increase in the number of fishers from which the Facility sources.
- (iii) The opportunity to diversify income among fishers.

(b) *Market Development.* Application describes the market opportunities that exist and the ability to provide sufficient supply, including:

- (i) The Increase in the number and kind of markets or sales channels that the Facility provides and/or serves, including any new Value-Added products.
- (ii) Applications describe how the expanded Processing capacity will meet producer, buyer, and consumer needs.

(3) *Financial Viability, Up to 20 Points.*

(a) The project will contribute to the ongoing financial viability of the Facility, either through profitability or assurances of ongoing financial support, supported by income and expense projections for three years.

- (i) Description of commitments from fishers to demonstrate reliability of supply.
- (ii) Description of commitments from potential buyers to demonstrate product demand and robust sales.
- (iii) Description of the plan and timeline of achieving optimal Processing capacity at the existing Facility.

(4) *Technical Merit and Achievability, Up to 20 Points.*

- (a) The application presents a clear, well-conceived, complete, and suitable overall Work Plan.
- (b) The application presents a realistic schedule with project milestones and timelines for implementing the proposed project activities during the period of performance.
- (c) The budget provides a clear, detailed description for each budget line item, and is directly linked to project activities and key staff.
- (d) The proposed activities and budget are relevant for the scale and scope of the project including how each activity contributes to achieving the outcome.

- (e) Key staff have the experience and capacity to implement the project and maintain expanded operations after the period of performance ends.
- (f) The project is comprised of key partnerships and collaborations with aligned local and regional entities that enhance and ensure project success.
- (g) The application identifies major risks (e.g., product recall; current and past and current violations of Federal and state health and safety laws, regulations and standards; labor risks; access to operating capital risk; and other legal risks) and appropriate risk mitigation strategies.

(5) *Labor and Personnel, Up to 10 Points.*

The application describes how the project enhances worker conditions and safety through payment of living wages, essential benefits, worker training, and/or promotion of safe working conditions. The application should disclose the Facility's current or past violations of Federal and state safety and labor laws, regulations and standards, and how and when any such violations were resolved.

(6) *Marine Impact, Up to 10 Points.*

- (a) Applicant describes how the project will result in fewer invasive Wild-Caught catfish species in the marine ecosystem in the area where the Facility is located.
- (b) Applicant describes pollution control strategies for managing water quality and solid waste.

(7) *Community Impact & Support, Up to 10 points.*

To receive points for this section, applicants must provide letters of support from State or local leadership or the Tribe where the proposed project will take place. For a project located on Tribal Lands where the applicant is not a member of the Tribe nor an entity owned or operated by that Tribe, a Tribal Resolution of Consent must be provided. Other documentation such as a Letter of Support from the Tribal Council for the governing body of the Tribe with jurisdiction over the Tribal Lands where the project is located (if applicable) is also an acceptable acknowledgement of Tribal consent. Any applicant that fails to provide a Tribal Resolution or Letter of Consent from the Tribe will not be considered for funding.

Qualifying leaders may include but are not limited to State government officials, local government officials, associations of agricultural producers, and labor unions. All letters



should include the following:

- (a) Identification of the stakeholder producing the letter and their connection to the project activities,
- (b) A description of the sustained community impact that will be supported by expansion activities to be carried out under the grant, and
- (c) Additional information relative to the project's impact on the long-term needs and goals of the community.

(8) *Discretionary Points, Up to 15 points.*

During Administrative Agency Review, up to 15 discretionary points may be assigned for projects to maximize diversity among awards on the basis of geography and species, including Apex Predators.

## 5.2 REVIEW AND SELECTION PROCESS

(1) *Step 1: Initial Application Qualification Screening.*

Each application is initially reviewed for overall completeness, as well as compliance with eligibility and Program requirements as set forth in this NOFO. If an application does not meet these requirements, it is removed from consideration and will not be scored.

(2) *Step 2: Panel Review.*

Each application that passes initial application qualification screening (Step 1) is evaluated by a panel of reviewers. The review panel evaluates their assigned applications using instructions prepared by RBCS officials. Individual reviewers confer with other panel members to derive a consensus score based on the strengths and weaknesses identified for each proposal. The consensus score serves as the basis for awarding grant funds.

(3) *Step 3: Agency Review.*

RBCS will conduct a final administrative evaluation of the panel's top rankings and recommendations. In addition to the rank and scores, RBCS reviews each application to ensure that potential recommended projects align with the scope, allowability of budget items, available funding, and USDA priorities as outlined in the NOFO. RBCS staff will work with top-ranked applicants to negotiate any revisions to projects as necessary. RBCS will also assess an organization's ability to account for the use of Federal funds and monitor the performance associated with these funds using the guidance provided by 2 CFR [200.302](#).

RBCS will review projects for environmental impacts, to determine next steps for the project to achieve compliance under NEPA and NHPA Section 106 as outlined in Section 1.5.

(4) *Step 4: Ranking of Applications.*

RBCS will rank complete and eligible applications based on their scores with higher scoring applications receiving first consideration.

(5) *Step 5: Funding selected applications.*

The Administrator of RBCS will make the final award decisions based on all of the foregoing scores, reviewed information, and discretionary points.

## 6.0 AWARD ADMINISTRATION INFORMATION

### 6.1 AWARD NOTICES

Successful applicants will receive a signed notice of Federal award, containing instructions on requirements necessary to proceed with execution and performance of the award.

### 6.2 UNSUCCESSFUL APPLICANTS

If an application is not selected for funding, the Applicant will be notified in writing via postal or electronic mail and informed of any review and appeal rights. See [7 CFR part 11](#) for USDA National Appeals Division procedures. Funding of successfully appealed applications will be limited to and conditioned upon available funding. USDA anticipates that there will be no available funds for successful appellants once all MPPEP funds are awarded and obligated.

### 6.3 ADMINISTRATIVE AND NATIONAL POLICY REQUIREMENTS

- (1) As part of the Notice of Award all grant recipients must abide by the Federal Assistance Agreement (Form RD 4280-2).
- (2) Additional requirements that apply to recipients selected for this Program can be found in the governmentwide Grants and Agreements regulations codified in 2 CFR parts [25](#), [170](#), [175](#), [180](#), [182](#), [183](#), [184](#), [200](#), [400](#), [415](#), [417](#), [418](#), [421](#); and [48 CFR part 31](#), and successor regulations to these parts.
- (3) All recipients of Federal financial assistance are required to report information about first-tier sub-awards and executive total compensation in accordance with [2 CFR part 170](#)). The recipient must have the necessary processes and systems in place to comply with the Federal Funding Accountability and Transparency Act of 2006 ([Pub. L. 109-282](#)) reporting requirements (see [2 CFR 170.210\(b\)](#)), unless exempt under [2 CFR 170.105\(b\)](#)).
- (4) All awards of Federal financial assistance made under this NOFO are subject to applicable civil rights

laws, which may include Title VI of the Civil Rights Act of 1964, Section 504 of the Rehabilitation Act of 1973, Age Discrimination Act of 1975, Title VIII of the Civil Rights Act of 1968, Title IX of the Education Amendments Act of 1973, and the Equal Credit Opportunity Act of 1974.

- (5) *Geospatial Data.* Awardee, and any and all contracts entered into by the Awardee with respect to the Award, shall ensure that geospatial data required to be collected and provided to the agency, conforms with the requirements of USDA Department Regulation DR-3465-001 and the Geospatial Metadata Standards set forth in DM 3465-001, which can be obtained online at [usda.gov/directives/dr-3465-001](https://usda.gov/directives/dr-3465-001) and [usda.gov/directives/dm-3465-001](https://usda.gov/directives/dm-3465-001).

## 6.4 REPORTING REQUIREMENTS, ACCOUNTABILITY AND GRANT DISBURSEMENT

*Project Performance/Reporting.* The maximum Period of Performance is 24 months. However, once the project has been completed, the Period of Performance ceases. After grant approval and through grant completion, you will be required to provide the following, as indicated in the Financial Assistance Agreement, Form RD 4280-2:

- (1) A SF-425, Federal Financial Report, and a project performance report will be required on a semi-annual basis (due 30 working days after end of the semi-annual period). For the purposes of this grant, semi-annual periods end on June 30<sup>th</sup> and December 31<sup>st</sup>. The project performance reports will include the elements prescribed in the Financial Assistance Agreement, Form RD 4280-2, including but not limited to:
  - (a) Processing volume increased (number of pounds or tons) at the Facility.
  - (b) New Value-Added products developed by the Facility.
  - (c) Increase in number of fishers and/or vessels served by the Facility.
  - (d) Number of new sales channels accessed by the Facility.
  - (e) Number of jobs created and retained at the Facility.
- (2) A final project and financial status report within 120 days after the expiration or termination of the grant.
- (3) Awardees must comply with FSIS as required to attain and maintain inspection status.
- (4) One year after project completion the applicant must provide a project performance report describing the outcomes in expanding Processing capacity as identified in the MPPEP application and Financial Assistance Agreement, Form RD 4280-2. The report is due 60 days

after the first full year following the year in which the expansion project was completed.

- (5) Awardees subject to the audit requirements of [2 CFR 200.501](#), shall provide a full and complete reporting package in accordance with [2 CFR 200.512\(c\)](#), submitted to the Federal Audit Clearinghouse *the earlier of* 30 calendar days after the auditee receives the auditor's report(s) or nine months after the end of the audit period.
- (6) Awardees must request disposition instruction from the Agency if equipment purchased with grant funds is no longer needed for its original purpose. The Agency will follow [2 CFR 200.313](#) when issuing disposition instructions.

## 6.5 PAYMENTS AND GRANT DISBURSEMENTS

Grant funds will be disbursed on a reimbursement basis as follows. Documentation submitted for reimbursement must clearly demonstrate that cost sharing funds (50 percent of the total project cost) have been spent in advance or as a pro-rata portion of Federal grant funds being requested.

- (1) Recipients may submit requests for reimbursement no more frequently than monthly. Ordinarily, payment will be made within 30 days after receipt of a proper request for reimbursement.
- (2) Recipients must not request reimbursement for the Federal share of amounts withheld from contractors to ensure satisfactory completion of work until after any such payments have been made to the contractors.
- (3) Recipients must use SF-270, Request for Advance or Reimbursement, to request grant reimbursements. Fund requests must at a minimum include documentation of costs and evidence of payment(s), including payment date(s). Failure to provide sufficient documentation of costs and evidence of payment, including payment date, may result in a denial of reimbursement.

## 6.6 ACKNOWLEDGMENT OF USDA SUPPORT

Proper acknowledgement of a Recipient's USDA funding in published solicitations (e.g., for State competitions), presentations, press releases, and other communications is critical for the success of Agency's programs. As required in [2 CFR 415.2](#), grant recipients must acknowledge USDA support in all publications written or published with USDA grant or Cooperative agreement support.

The following acknowledgment of USDA funding must appear in all published materials or products, in any format (web sites, audiovisuals, etc.), that are substantially based upon or developed under a USDA award:

“Funding for [Project or Publication] was made possible by a grant from the U.S. Department of Agriculture (USDA). The contents of the [Publication] are solely the responsibility of the authors and do not necessarily represent the official views of the USDA.”

Recipients are strongly encouraged to acknowledge Federal funding in public statements, such as press releases regarding projects and activities.

## 7.0 AGENCY CONTACTS

### 7.1 PROGRAMMATIC QUESTIONS

After closely reviewing this NOFO in its entirety, applicants and other interested parties are encouraged to contact MPPEP staff at [mppep@usda.gov](mailto:mppep@usda.gov).

**For additional information, please visit the MPPEP Website:** [rd.usda.gov/programs-services/business-programs/meat-and-poultry-processing-expansion-program](https://rd.usda.gov/programs-services/business-programs/meat-and-poultry-processing-expansion-program).

### 7.2 GRANTS.GOV QUESTIONS

All questions regarding Grants.gov technical assistance must be directed to the Grants.gov Applicant Support portal at [grants.gov/support](https://grants.gov/support).

## 8.0 OTHER INFORMATION

### 8.1 DEFINITIONS

For the purpose of this Program, the following definitions will apply:

**Agency.** The RBCS or successor agency assigned by the Secretary of Agriculture to administer the Meat and Poultry Processing Expansion Program – Phase 3.

**Apex Predator.** A species at the top of a food chain, without natural predators of their own.

**Aquatic Nuisance Species and/or Invasive Species.** A nonindigenous species that threatens the diversity or abundance of native species or the ecological stability of infested waters, or commercial, agricultural, aquacultural or recreational activities dependent on such waters ([16 U.S.C. 4702](#)). Aquatic Nuisance Species and Invasive Species are considered synonymous for the purposes of this NOFO.

**Business Plan.** A formal statement of a set of business goals, the reasons why they are attainable, and the plan for reaching those goals, including Pro Forma Financial Statements appropriate to the term, scope of the project and sufficient to evidence the viability of the project. It may also contain background information about the organization or team attempting to reach those goals.

**Complete Application.** An application that contains all parts necessary for the Agency to determine

applicant and project eligibility, and the financial feasibility and technical merit of the project, and contains sufficient information to determine a priority score for the application as determined by the Agency.

*Cooperative.* An entity that is legally chartered by the State or Tribe in which it operates as a cooperatively operated business, or an entity that is not legally chartered as a cooperative but is owned and operated for the benefit of its members, with returns of residual earnings paid to such members on the basis of patronage.

*Domestically Owned.* An entity organized in the United States under the law of the State, the States, or under a Tribe's jurisdiction where the entity operates, and a majority of the entity is owned by US citizens or individuals who have been naturalized as US citizens.

*Facility.* A single Siluriformes Processing plant designed, built, equipped, etc., for Primary and/or Further Processing of Siluriformes.

*Financial Assistance Agreement, Form RD 4280-2.* It is the grant agreement between the Agency and the recipient setting forth the provisions under which the grant will be administered.

*Further Processing.* Conversion of raw Siluriformes products, through smoking, curing, salting, fermenting, cooking, canning, refining, or rendering into cooked, cured, and preserved products. Also known as Value-Added Processing.

*Hazard Analysis and Critical Control Points (HACCP).* A management system in which food safety is addressed through the analysis and control of biological, chemical, and physical hazards from raw material production, procurement and handling, to manufacturing, distribution and consumption of the finished product.

*Independently Owned and Operated.* Not influenced or controlled by others in matters of opinion, conduct, etc., and not subject to another's authority or jurisdiction.

*Meat.* Species amenable to USDA inspection including cattle, sheep, swine, goats, Siluriformes (catfish), and equine. Also, nonamenable species eligible for voluntary inspection including exotic species as described in [9 CFR part 352](#) and rabbit as described in [9 CFR part 354](#). This NOFO is limited to invasive, Wild-Caught catfish.

*Primary Processing.* Initial Processing of landed catfish (purchased from fishers, fishing cooperatives, fisheries...). Includes cutting and boning, and other Processing.

*Processing.* Includes Primary Processing and Further Processing of Siluriformes. See definitions

for Primary Processing and Further Processing.

*Processors.* A business engaged in the Primary Processing, or Further Processing of Siluriformes. See definitions for Processing, Primary Processing, and Further Processing.

*Program.* Program means the Meat and Poultry Processing Expansion Program authorized by Section 1001(b)(4) of the American Rescue Plan Act of 2021 and administered by the Agency.

*Siluriformes (catfish).* A scientific order of fish that includes all catfish found in brackish and freshwater. For this NOFO, Siluriformes are limited to invasive, Wild-Caught species of catfish.

*State.* Any of the 50 States of the United States, the Commonwealth of Puerto Rico, the District of Columbia, the U.S. Virgin Islands, Guam, American Samoa, the Commonwealth of the Northern Mariana Islands, the Republic of Palau, the Federated States of Micronesia, and the Republic of the Marshall Islands.

*State Aquatic Nuisance Plan.* State Aquatic Nuisance Species (ANS) plans are comprehensive documents that outline how states will prevent, control, and manage the spread of non-native aquatic species that can negatively impact ecosystems, economies, and public health. These plans are developed by state agencies, often with input from federal agencies, non-governmental organizations, and industry representatives. The plans are reviewed by the Aquatic Nuisance Species Task Force and often include public review periods.

*Tribal Entities.* Tribal Entities is expansive and includes all entities falling under the eligible legal structures, including but not limited to: Tribal owned corporations, intertribal non-profits and associations, Alaska Native Corporations, Native entities within the State of Alaska recognized by and eligible to receive services from the U.S. Department of the Interior's Bureau of Indian Affairs, Native Hawaiian organizations including Homestead Associations, State recognized Tribes/non-profits, and individually-owned Native American entities.

*Tribe.* Tribal Governments of Indian Tribes as defined by the Federally Recognized Indian Tribe List Act (List Act) of 1994 ([Pub. L. No. 103-454](#)), their wholly owned arms and instrumentalities, and joint or multi-tribal government entities are eligible to apply.

*Value-Added.* The incremental profit earned from each transaction or step in manufacture after deducting production costs, depreciation, and other relevant expenses. Each stage of production or ownership transfer typically adds value to a good, product, or service.

*Wild-Caught.* Fish or other seafood that is caught in their natural environment, such as a lake, river, or ocean. This does not include farmed seafood, which is raised in a controlled environment such

as large tanks.

*Work Plan.* A narrative provided by the applicant that demonstrates the feasibility of the proposed project and Facility to meet the objectives of the MPPEP Program, including a set of goals, strategies, anticipated outcomes, and well-developed targeting criteria for doing so.

## 8.2 EQUAL OPPORTUNITY FOR RELIGIOUS ORGANIZATIONS

(1) Faith-based organizations may apply for this award on the same basis as any other organization, as set forth at, and subject to the protections and requirements of, this part and any applicable constitutional and statutory requirements, including [42 U.S.C. 2000bb](#) *et seq.* USDA 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.

(2) 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 accommodation may also be sought under many of these religious freedom and conscience protection laws.

(3) A faith-based organization may not use direct Federal financial assistance from USDA 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, 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.

## 8.3 NON-DISCRIMINATION STATEMENT

In accordance with Federal civil rights laws and USDA civil rights regulations and policies, the USDA, its Agencies, offices, and employees, and institutions participating in or administering USDA programs are prohibited from discriminating based on race, color, national origin, religion, sex, disability, age, marital status, family/parental status, income derived from a public assistance program, political beliefs, or reprisal or retaliation for prior civil rights activity, in any program or activity conducted or funded by USDA (not all bases apply to all programs). Remedies and complaint filing deadlines vary by program or incident.

Persons with disabilities who require alternative means of communication for program information (e.g., Braille, large print, audiotape, American Sign Language, etc.) should contact the State or local Agency



that administers the program or contact USDA through the Telecommunications Relay Service at 711 (voice and TTY). Additionally, program information may be made available in languages other than English.

To file a program discrimination complaint, complete the USDA Program Discrimination Complaint Form, AD-3027, found online at [usda.gov/about-usda/general-information/staff-offices/office-assistant-secretary-civil-rights/how-file-program-discrimination-complaint](https://usda.gov/about-usda/general-information/staff-offices/office-assistant-secretary-civil-rights/how-file-program-discrimination-complaint) and at any USDA office or write a letter addressed to USDA and provide in the letter all information requested in the form. To request a copy of the complaint form, call (866) 632-9992. Submit your completed form or letter to USDA by:

(1) Mail: U.S. Department of Agriculture

Office of the Assistant Secretary for Civil Rights

1400 Independence Avenue, SW, Mail Stop 9410

Washington, D.C. 20250-9410; or

(2) Fax: (202) 690-7442; or

(3) Email: [program.intake@usda.gov](mailto:program.intake@usda.gov)

## 8.4 PAPERWORK REDUCTION ACT

In accordance with the Paperwork Reduction Act of 1995 (44 U.S.C. §§ 3501 et seq), an agency may not conduct or sponsor, and a person is not required to respond to a collection of information unless it displays a valid OMB control number. The valid OMB control number for this information collection is 0570-0079.