

Funding Opportunity: Plant Protection Act Section 7721 Fiscal Year 2026 National Clean Plant Network

The U.S. Department of Agriculture's (USDA) Animal and Plant Health Inspection Service (APHIS) is announcing the availability of funds to carry out the Plant Protection Act Section 7721 (PPA 7721) National Clean Plant Network (NCPN) program. Network plant centers protect healthy U.S. agriculture by providing clean plant propagative material free of targeted pathogens that cause economic loss. The APHIS website www.aphis.usda.gov/funding/ncpn has additional details about the NCPN and this funding opportunity, including information for applicants and how to submit proposals. PPA 7721 funding for the Plant Pest and Disease Management and Disaster Prevention Program is addressed in a separate Notice of Funding Opportunity.

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A. BASIC INFORMATION

Federal Agency Name: United States Department of Agriculture (USDA), Animal and Plant Health Inspection Service (APHIS), Plant Protection and Quarantine (PPQ)

Funding Opportunity Title: Plant Protection Act Section 7721 Fiscal Year 2026 National Clean Plant Network (NCPN)

Funding Opportunity Number: USDA-APHIS-10025-PPQ-NCPN-2026

Announcement Type: Initial Announcement

Assistance Listing Number: 10.025

Key Dates: Proposals submitted for National Clean Plant Network funding must be submitted to ncpn@usda.gov **by September 3, 2025, 11:59 PM Eastern Time.** Applications received after this deadline will not be considered for funding.

- ☐ If applicable, States that are required to comply with [Executive Order 12372](#), Intergovernmental Review of Federal Programs, will need to include a waiver or approval response letter from the State's Single Point of Contact (SPOC). Check the [Intergovernmental Review \(SPOC List\) \(usda.gov\)](#) for the most current list of required States for APHIS CFDA 10.

The agreement performance period for cooperative agreements is estimated to begin between May 1, 2026, and September 30, 2026, and end no later than 12 months after the start date. The performance period for interagency projects is estimated to begin between March 1, 2026, and June 1, 2026, and end no later than September 30, 2026.

A.1 FUNDING DETAILS

This funding opportunity is provided to carry out the provisions as described in Section 7721 of the Plant Protection Act (PPA 7721). This program makes funding available for the National Clean Plant Network (NCPN) through PPA 7721. The purpose of the NCPN program is to establish a network of Clean Plant Centers for diagnostic and pathogen elimination services to produce clean propagative plant material and to maintain blocks of pathogen-tested plant material in sites located throughout the United States. Additional details about the program are available on the [APHIS NCPN website](#). APHIS will make available at least \$8 million in funding for the National Clean Plant Network. In this funding opportunity, APHIS is seeking proposals for projects that address the funding priority topics described in below in section A.2. Executive Summary. PPA 7721 funding for the Plant Pest and Disease Management and Disaster Prevention Program is addressed in a separate Notice of Funding Opportunity.

A.2 EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

APHIS will consider project proposals that clearly and directly support the strategic goals and objectives of the National Clean Plant Network as described in the [NCPN Strategic Plan](#). The NCPN provides propagative plant material free of targeted plant pathogens to protect the environment and ensure the global competitiveness of U.S. specialty crop producers.

Program priorities align with the goals specified in the NCPN Strategic Plan and include: 1) Optimizing the production, maintenance, and distribution of clean plants, 2) Advancing special initiatives by optimizing the adaptation and implementation of novel technologies and new ideas while increasing the awareness of the importance, availability, and use of clean plants, and 3) Optimizing network resources. Applicants should refer to the [NCPN Request for Proposals](#) for additional details.

Agency Contact Information: For questions about the NCPN program and this funding opportunity, please contact ncpn@usda.gov.

Anticipated Awards: The program anticipates funding between 18-25 proposals, with the funding level depending on the scope and objectives of each proposal.

A.3 ELIGIBLE APPLICANTS

PPA 7721 NCPN eligible applicants are:

1. Land grant universities
2. Non-land grant colleges of agriculture
3. State agricultural experiment stations
4. State and Federal agencies
5. Non-governmental organizations

A.4 THRESHOLD ELIGIBILITY CRITERIA

Proposal packages must meet these initial screening criteria to be considered for further review. Proposals that do not meet these initial screening criteria will not be considered.

1. Proposals must be submitted by eligible entities.
2. Proposals must clearly address at least one NCPN Strategic Plan goal, as described in section A.2 Executive Summary.
3. Any commodity proposed as a target for Network program funding must qualify as a “specialty crop” as defined by the USDA (for the definition, see the Specialty Crops Competitiveness Act of 2004 (7 U.S.C. 1621 note), amended under [section 10010 of the Agricultural Act of 2014, Public Law 113-79](#)).
4. All required documents and forms listed in Section B.2 must (a) be included in the proposal package, and (b) comply with the submission instructions described in Section B of this announcement. Proposal packages with missing or incomplete documents or forms will not be considered for review.
5. Proposals must be received on or before the submission deadline. Proposals received after the submission deadline will not be considered.

A.5 FUNDING RESTRICTIONS

Funding restrictions, including unallowable costs, indirect cost cap, and cost restrictions, are provided in the [PPA 7721 Use of Funds \(Appendix D\)](#). Generally unallowable costs are described in 2 CFR Subpart E, Cost Principles – General Provisions for Selected Items of Cost.

Applicants can submit multiple proposals. If submitting more than one project, each proposal must be submitted individually.

A.6 COST SHARING

Cost sharing, matching, or cost participation is not required for PPA 7721 projects. If an applicant includes contributions as part of a cost share in their budget proposal and it is accepted by APHIS, the commitment of funds becomes legally binding, must be reported on the SF-425, and is subject to audit.

A.7 PROGRAM DESCRIPTION

The National Clean Plant Network (NCPN) was established under The Food, Conservation and Energy Act of 2008 (Farm Bill) Title X, Sec 10202. Its purpose is to support a network of clean plant centers in the United States for specialty crops to provide reliable sources of propagative material that are free of propagative-

borne pathogens. Network clean plant centers conduct diagnostic and pathogen elimination services and establish foundation blocks (nuclear stock) to provide pathogen-tested plant materials to nurseries, growers, and to state certification programs.

The NCPN provides propagative plant material free of targeted plant pathogens to protect the environment and ensure the global competitiveness of U.S. specialty crop producers.

FUNDING PRIORITIES: APHIS will consider project proposals that clearly and directly support the strategic goals and objectives of the National Clean Plant Network. Program priorities align with the goals specified in the NCPN Strategic Plan and include: 1) Optimizing the production, maintenance, and distribution of clean plants, 2) Advancing special initiatives by optimizing the adaptation and implementation of novel technologies and new ideas while increasing the awareness of the importance, availability, and use of clean plants, and 3) Optimizing network resources.

TYPE OF ASSISTANCE INSTRUMENT: Most awards will be funded via cooperative agreements; interagency agreements will be used if the recipient is a non-APHIS Federal agency. Cooperative agreements are expected to include substantial involvement by APHIS to assist in the completion of the goals and objectives of the work.

UNALLOWABLE COSTS: All APHIS awards are subject to the terms and conditions, cost principles, allowable and unallowable costs, direct and indirect costs, cost share and matching, and other considerations as described and defined in:

- [PPA 7721 Use of Funds](#) document, found in Appendix D of the FY 2026 PPA 7721 Implementation Plan, and
- [2 CFR Subpart E](#), Cost Principles – General Provisions for Selected Items of Cost.

All applicants must submit a detailed Financial Plan that adheres to the documents referenced above.

LEGISLATIVE AUTHORITY: The program is authorized under [Section 7721 of the Plant Protection Act](#).

B. APPLICATION CONTENT AND FORMAT

Applicants may submit more than one project proposal. Applicants who submit more than one project proposal must do so as a separate application package.

B.1 OBTAINING AN APPLICATION PACKAGE

Applicants can find all application materials on the [ezFedGrants](#) website or the [Grants.gov](#) website by searching CFDA number **10.025**. Application materials and additional information are also available on the [USDA APHIS NCPN website](#). All application materials are compliant with Section 508 of the Rehabilitation Act of 1973 for accessibility.

B.2 CONTENT AND FORM OF THE APPLICATION PACKAGE

The application package must include the documents listed below.

- ☐ Project proposal [WORK PLAN](#). *See below.*
- ☐ Project proposal [FINANCIAL PLAN](#). *See below.*
- ☐ Documentation of Pre-Proposal Review Process. *See below.*

Any proposal with missing or significantly incomplete documents will result in a rejected application.

Project Proposal Work Plan

Applicants must submit a project proposal Work Plan that provides details on all aspects of the project. The Work Plan Template is available at the link above from the [USDA APHIS NCPN website](#).

Proposal work plans should not exceed 15 pages (11 point font, single spaced) for proposals covering a single crop or special initiative. For proposals with multiple crops or multiple entities, the work plan may be increased up to 5 pages for each additional crop or entity, up to a maximum of 40 pages. This limitation does not include any proposal cover pages, budget, or appendices.

Project Proposal Financial Plan

Applicants must submit a project proposal Financial Plan that includes details about the project budget. When preparing a Financial Plan, applicants must comply with the guidance and funding restrictions described in **Section A.7**. The Financial Plan Template is available at the link above from the [USDA APHIS NCPN website](#).

Documentation of Pre-Proposal Review Process

Applicants should provide a letter of support documenting pre-proposal review and coordination with the appropriate NCPN specialty crop governing body. This process is not required for proposals focused on cross-network special initiatives, but these proposals should be coordinated with the appropriate working group. Applicants may request working group or crop governing body contact information at ncpn@usda.gov.

B.3 SUBMISSION REQUIREMENTS AND DEADLINES

The closing date and time for receipt of proposal submissions is **September 3, 2025, 11:59 PM Eastern Time**. Proposals received after the submission deadline will not be considered.

Applicants must submit the required application materials via email to ncpn@usda.gov by the deadline listed in this announcement. The electronic date and time stamp from the email system will be used to determine whether Federal applications are received before the deadline. Applicants will receive confirmation of submission by email. Questions or requests for technical assistance may be sent by email to ncpn@usda.gov.

B.4 UNIQUE ENTITY IDENTIFIER AND SYSTEM FOR AWARD MANAGEMENT (SAM)

System for Award Management (SAM)

All applicants (except Federal agencies) are required to register in the System for Award Management (SAM) prior to submitting an application and must continue to maintain an active SAM registration with current information throughout the award period of performance (2 CFR §200.205). To register, go to the [SAM website](#). **When creating a SAM account, it may take up to two weeks before the account appears in federal systems.** Applicants should verify their SAM registration, and applicants who are not already registered in SAM are encouraged to complete this task as soon as possible. Applicants should also register for a Unique Entity ID within SAM; signing up for a SAM account and registering for a Unique Entity ID are separate processes. Entity registration is the process of providing information about yourself or your organization so the government can verify you are a legitimate entity that can apply for government contracts or assistance. To learn more and apply for a Unique Entity ID visit [SAM.gov](#).

Additional instructions for SAM registration are available on APHIS' [How to Apply for APHIS Funding: Getting Started](#) web page.

B.5 OTHER SUBMISSION REQUIREMENTS

- Optional Appendix: Strategic Plans or Annual Reports. Applicants seeking Network support that also have established strategic plans or issue annual entity reports for their operating units may include these as an appendix.

- APHIS complies with [Section 508 of the Rehabilitation Act of 1973](#).

C. APPLICATION REVIEW INFORMATION

The USDA is responsible for selecting and approving PPA 7721 NCPN funded projects. The funding of any submitted proposals is at the discretion of USDA in consultation with the Network's Governing Board which forms its proposal review panel.

C.1 EVALUATION CRITERIA

Proposals will be evaluated based on the criteria listed below.

1. **Goal Alignment.** Proposals are assessed on how closely they align with the stated mission and goals of NCPN. Applicants are requested to clearly state how their requests align with the NCPN Strategic Plan FY 2021-2025.
2. **Stakeholder Participation and Focus.** Broad stakeholder participation in projects is encouraged and evidence of this should be captured in a proposal. Realistically projected information on program deliverables, specifically outcomes impacting nurseries, growers, and other users of clean plant material is encouraged.
3. **Governing Bodies and Harmonization.** Networking is one of the hallmarks of NCPN, through NCPN-focused specialty crop governing bodies and their activities to coordinate proposals within their respective crop groups for Network consideration. Proposals that are discussed and harmonized among clean plant centers working on the same crop groups are encouraged and given priority funding consideration.
4. **Overall Merits of Projects.** The merit and value of projects as they relate to the implementation of Network operations and initiatives is among the most important factors for consideration. This includes the extent to which the project outcomes and deliverables are likely to have significant impact and value to stakeholders. Applicants should carefully consider what is asked of them in the suggested work plan template and provide the requested information concisely, but with sufficient detail to convey the impacts of the proposed work.

C.2 SELECTION AND REVIEW PROCESS

USDA/APHIS, USDA/ARS, and USDA/NIFA as represented by the members of NCPN's Governing Board Core Working Group are responsible for making recommendations of NCPN projects for funding through cooperative agreements. They are assisted in their task by the members of NCPN's Governing Board that form the panel to participate in the evaluation and recommendation process of proposals. The panel composed of Federal and State employees makes the primary recommendation of projects for funding and submits their recommendations to USDA for final approval. They may seek counsel from subject-matter experts as appropriate. Measures are in place to avoid potential conflicts of interest. In the event of a real or perceived conflict of interest, a panel member shall recuse themselves as appropriate. USDA/APHIS/PPQ has final funding obligating authority in determining which projects are funded for this program.

Based on reviewer recommendations, APHIS may award less than the requested amount of funds for a project. In these cases, applicants may accept or decline the award that is offered. If applicants accept a reduced funding level, applicants will submit a revised work plan that addresses reviewer concerns and aligns with the award amount. APHIS will provide additional guidance to applicants in these situations.

D. FEDERAL AWARD ADMINISTRATION INFORMATION

APHIS will administer the agreements and collaborate with project recipients to provide advice, receive and review project documents, offer comments and suggestions, track project performance, and communicate

with recipients as necessary to ensure progress in accomplishing the project, identifying obstacles, and resolving concerns.

Recipients will track performance and expenditures, provide progress reports and project deliverables in accordance with the project Work Plan, and communicate with PPQ staff to assess and evaluate progress.

D.1 AWARD NOTICES

Period of Performance: Funding is awarded for a single year with the option to extend up to one year as may be allowed by Federal regulations if USDA determines a justification to be acceptable. Funding will not be allowed, nor activities approved to occur, either before or after the designated period of performance. A pre-award must be established if activities need to occur before the period of performance.

APHIS will announce the funding decisions by releasing the FY 2026 Spending Plan through a Stakeholder Registry Notice, anticipated to occur in February 2026. All applicants, both funded and unfunded, will be notified by email after the list of awarded projects is announced by USDA APHIS.

Applicants selected for funding will receive instruction on next steps to process a Notice of Award (NOA) via ezFedGrants. The Notice of Award will provide pertinent instructions and information including but not limited to the information described in [2 CFR § 200.210](#) and a reference to the [APHIS General Terms and Conditions](#).

Non-Federal applicants whose proposals are selected for funding may be required to submit the following forms:

- ☐ Certification Regarding Lobbying. Required if the Federal Assistance portion of the project's financial plan is greater than \$100,000.
- ☐ SF-LLL "Disclosure of Lobbying Activities". Required if the Federal Assistance portion of the project's financial plan is greater than \$100,000.
- ☐ A signed copy of the current Negotiated Indirect Cost Rate Agreement (NICRA), if an awardee is applying their NICRA.

Federal applicants selected for funding will receive further communication from APHIS regarding requirements and processes for Interagency Agreements.

D.2 ADMINISTRATIVE AND NATIONAL POLICY REQUIREMENTS

Successful applicants must comply with the requirements contained in the [2 CFR Part 200](#) Uniform Administrative Requirements, Cost Principles, and Audit Requirements for Federal Awards. Successful applicants also must comply with the APHIS General Terms and Conditions, the approved project Work Plan, and the approved project Financial Plan.

Prior to obligating funds, APHIS will conduct a risk assessment of applicants. Applicants will be verified in the System for Award Management (SAM) to ensure they have not been disbarred or suspended, proposed for debarment, declared ineligible, or voluntarily excluded from covered transactions by any federal department or agency. APHIS may not issue federal award to an applicant until the applicant has complied with all applicable unique entity identifiers and SAM requirements. If an applicant has not fully complied with the requirements, APHIS may determine that the applicant is not eligible to receive a federal award.

When anticipated total federal share exceeds the simplified acquisition threshold, APHIS is required to review and consider information about the applicant included in the designated integrity and performance system accessible through SAM. An applicant, if desired, may review and comment on any information about their organization previously entered and currently in the system. When completing the risk assessment, APHIS will consider applicant comments in addition to other information in the designated integrity and

performance system to assess applicant's integrity, business ethics, and record of performance under federal awards.

D.3 REPORTING

The Recipient shall provide semiannual program reports to the PPQ Program Manager through the ezFedGrants system and in compliance with the APHIS General Terms and Conditions. Semiannual performance and financial reports are required and must be submitted in ezFedGrants. The reports will be used to verify compliance with provisions of the Cooperative or Interagency Agreement.

D.4 PROJECT EVALUATION

The Recipient's performance will be evaluated through the review of semiannual performance and financial reports, as well as periodic discussions of project progress with the PPQ Program Manager. Performance is evaluated based on the following criteria to determine if the Recipient met the project standards included in the proposal Work and Financial Plans and if expected results and benefits were achieved:

1. Adherence to the project objectives.
2. Adherence to project schedule.
3. Adherence to project budget.
4. Delivery of results that meet the agreement performance standards and achieve stated outcomes.

E. OTHER INFORMATION

The USDA is not obligated to make any award as a result of this announcement nor to make any changes to future announcements. Only the APHIS Authorized Departmental Officer can bind the Government to an expenditure of funds and this obligation of funds shall only occur in writing by authorized officials and under the approved USDA, APHIS Cooperative Agreement format.

E.1 DEFINITIONS

This announcement uses definitions as described in [Section 7721 of the Plant Protection Act](#). Per the Plant Protection Act 7 (USC Ch. 104), the term "specialty crop" has the meaning given the term in section 3 of the Specialty Crops Competitiveness Act of 2004 and includes fruits, vegetables, tree nuts, dried fruits, and nursery crops, including floriculture.