

Resilient Food Systems Infrastructure Program

Request for Proposals

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February 7, 2024

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Proposals Due:

April 15, 2024, by 4:30 p.m. CT

Late submissions will not be accepted



Louisiana Agricultural Finance Authority
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Executive Summary

The United States Department of Agriculture (USDA), Agricultural Marketing Service (AMS), has entered into a cooperative agreement with the Louisiana Department of Agriculture and Forestry (LDAF), Louisiana Agricultural Finance Authority (LAFA) to administer the Resilient Food Systems Infrastructure (RFSI) Program. LDAF-LAFA is working in partnership with USDA-AMS to award competitive grants to support middle-of-the-food-supply-chain infrastructure for domestic food and farm businesses and other eligible entities. Funds will support expanded capacity for the aggregation, processing, manufacturing, storing, transporting, wholesaling, and distribution of locally and regionally produced food products, including specialty crops, dairy, aquaculture, grains for human consumption, honey, eggs, and other food products, excluding meat, wild seafood, and poultry. This program is funded by Section 1001(b)(4) of the American Rescue Plan (ARP) Act of 2021 (Pub. L. 117—2).

Grant applicants may apply for two types of grants: Large Infrastructure Projects (matching funds required) and Special Purpose Equipment Purchase-only Projects (no matching funds required). The Special Purpose Equipment Purchase-only Project proposals must request funding ranging from \$10,000 - \$100,000. Large Infrastructure Project proposals must apply for funding ranging from \$100,000 - \$3 million. Large Infrastructure Project proposals are required to contribute 50% of the total proposed project cost as a match to federal funding. For historically underserved farmers and ranchers and small businesses that qualify under the Small Business Administration (SBA) (includes small, disadvantaged businesses, women-owned small businesses, and veteran-owned small businesses) the required match is 25% of the total proposed project cost.

LDAF-LAFA hereby solicits proposals for projects that fall within the scope of the Resilient Food Systems Infrastructure Program.

This notice identifies the RFSI Funding Priorities for Louisiana, eligibility criteria for projects and applicants, funding information, application form locations, and associated instructions.

Resilient Food Systems Infrastructure Program

General Information

Purpose

The purpose of the Resilient Food Systems Infrastructure Program (RFSI) is to assist U.S. states and territories to build resilience in the middle-of-the-food-supply-chain and strengthen local and regional food systems by creating new revenue streams for their state's producers. RFSI investments aim to create a food systems infrastructure to support competitive and profitable market access for domestic farm products. The RFSI program serves as an important component of USDA's framework to transform food systems to benefit consumers, producers, and rural communities by providing more options, increasing access, and creating new, more, and better markets for small and mid-sized producers.

The pandemic and recent supply chain disruptions have revealed the perils of a national food system that depends on capacity concentrated in a few geographic areas and requires many steps to get from farm to fork. To be more resilient, food systems of the future need to be more diversified, distributed, and local. The primary goal of RFSI is to support food system crops and products meant for human consumption (excluding meat, wild-caught seafood, and poultry products, which are funded through other USDA programs). Further, RFSI is intended to serve middle-of-the-food-supply-chain needs to add value and provide more, new, and better markets for locally or regionally produced food.

This program also aims to:

- Support development of value-added products for human consumption available to consumers
- Support proposals that provide fair prices, fair wages and new and safe job opportunities that keep profits in rural communities
- Increase diversity and processing options in terms of business model approaches, geography, and availability to underserved communities

The Louisiana Agricultural Finance Authority of the Louisiana Department of Agriculture and Forestry (LAF-A-LDAF) is requesting competitive grant proposals from Louisiana businesses and entities that propose to expand, aggregate, process, manufacture, store, transport, wholesale and distribute Louisiana-produced food products, including specialty crops, dairy, grains for human consumption, aquaculture, eggs, honey, and other food products. Meat, wild-caught seafood, and poultry products are excluded. Additionally, applications are sought that propose expanding middle-of-the-food-supply-chain capacity for locally and regionally produced foods and offer more and better market opportunities and new streams of revenue to small and mid-sized agricultural producers, including those who may not have access to value-added opportunities or processing to meet market demand for premium or value-added products, such as underserved producers.

Program Overview

Funding and Duration

LAFALDAF has been awarded \$6,234,099 in funding to administer a competitive RFSI awards program to identify and select projects that enhance Louisiana’s middle-of-the-food-supply-chain. These funds are available to implement selected infrastructure projects from May 24, 2024, through May 23, 2027.

Implementation Timeline

Table 1. LRFSIP Timeline

Activity	Important Grant Dates
Grant RFP Announced	February 7, 2024
Grant Proposal Submission Period Closes	April 15, 2024; 4:30 PM
Grant Proposal Competitive Review	April 16 - May 15, 2024
Grant Proposers Informed of USDA Approved, Selected Funded Grants	July 31, 2024 (tentative)
LRFSIP Funding Period Begins	September 1, 2024 (tentative)
LRFSIP Funding Period Concludes	April 30, 2027

NOTE: These dates are subject to change.

Louisiana’s Project Priorities

LAFALDAF sought comments by Louisiana’s food system stakeholders regarding what should be Louisiana’s RFSI program funding priorities. Proposed projects should address one or more of the following Louisiana middle-of-the-food-supply-chain priorities:

- Projects that upgrade or create new facilities for processing, preserving, or storing agricultural products
- Projects that purchase freezing and cold storage equipment for agricultural products
- Projects that purchase food preparation and packing equipment for agricultural products
- Projects that purchase equipment for the distribution of agricultural products
- Projects that propose hiring term-limited personnel to assist with implementation activities that enhance capacity of middle-of-the-supply-chain infrastructure
- Projects that plan for Hazard Analysis Critical Control Points (HACCP) of other food safety or worker safety measures or equipment recommendations

NOTE: Multiple proposals by an entity may be submitted; however, only one proposal per entity may be funded.

Allowable Project Activities

Louisiana's Infrastructure Grants will fund projects that expand capacity and infrastructure for the aggregation, processing, manufacturing, storing, transporting, wholesaling, or distribution of targeted agricultural products. Examples include:

- Expanding processing capacities, including adding product types, increasing production volumes, and supporting new wholesale/retail product lines
- Modernizing equipment or facilities through upgrades, repairs, or retooling; (e.g., adapting product lines for institutional procurement or adding parallel processing capacity)
- Purchasing and installing specialized equipment, such as processing components, sorting equipment, packing, and labeling equipment, or delivery vehicles
- Modernizing manufacturing, tracking, storage, and information technology systems
- Enhancing worker safety through adoption of new technologies or investment in equipment or facility improvements
- Constructing a new facility
- Increasing packaging and labeling capacities that meet compliance requirements under applicable laws (e.g., sealing, bagging, boxing, labeling, conveying, and product moving equipment)
- Increasing storage space, including cold storage
- Developing, customizing, or installing climate-smart equipment that reduces greenhouse gas emissions, increases efficiency in water use, improves air and/or water quality, and/or meets one or more of USDA's climate action goals
- Modernizing equipment or facilities to ensure food safety, including associated Hazard, Analysis, and Critical Control Points (HACCP) consultation, plan development and employee training
- Training on the use of all equipment purchased under the grant and associated new processes

Allowable activities or tasks that could be a part of such projects may include:

- Hiring term-limited personnel to assist with project implementation activities
- Purchasing special purpose equipment (must meet USDA-AMS-RFSI requirements). This includes the purchase of special purpose equipment for institutions or others that will benefit middle-of-the-supply-chain activities such as processing, aggregation, distribution of targeted agricultural product. Examples of special purpose equipment include delivery vehicles, packing and labeling equipment, egg packing machines, flotation tanks, and roasters.
- Analyzing potential facility upgrades and changes that meet regulatory requirements, obtaining design and/or architecture services, etc. (to the extent these costs are directly related to the project)
- Planning for Hazard Analysis Critical Control Points (HACCP) or other food safety or worker safety measures or equipment recommendations
- Upgrading or building new facilities for processing specific agricultural products, such as:
 - On-farm post-harvest processing, preservation, and storage/cold storage
 - Post-harvest cleaning and grading
 - Aggregator warehouse and storage, including cooperatives
 - Purchase of freezing equipment, freezer, or cold storage
 - Processing, canning, preserving and pasteurization
 - Preparation and packing
 - Drying, hulling, shelling, and milling
 - Cooking, baking, juicing, distilling, fermenting

All proposals must align with standards and protocols outlined in the Resilient Food Infrastructure Program Scope and Requirements:

https://www.ams.usda.gov/sites/default/files/media/RFSI_ProgramScopeandRequirements.pdf

New construction projects must comply with the National Environmental Policy Act (NEPA), National Historic Preservation Act (NHPA), Endangered Species Act (ESA), and all other federal environmental laws and regulations. LDAF-LAFA is required to review projects for NEPA compliance prior to the award of Infrastructure Grant awards. All construction proposals must be able to be completed no later than April 30, 2027.

Any public infrastructure project funded under RFSI must comply with the Buy America Sourcing requirements outlined in the Build America, Buy America (BABA) provisions of the Infrastructure Investment and Jobs Act. BABA does **NOT** apply to Equipment Only Grants (as they fall below the \$250,000 exception) or private for-profit entities applying for Complex Infrastructure Grants. All other Infrastructure Grant projects that surpass the \$250,000 project cost threshold of applicable procurement costs must adhere to BABA.

Ineligible Projects

The following activities will not be eligible for this Infrastructure grant funding opportunity:

- Acquiring real property (including land purchases), or any interest therein
- Proposals that propose the production of raw food activities. This grant program funds middle-of-the-food-supply-chain activities.
- Projects focused on meat and poultry processing or other ineligible agricultural products. Ineligible products include meat and poultry (excluding eggs), wild-caught seafood, exclusively animal feed and forage products, fiber, landscaping products, tobacco, or dietary supplements.
- Activities that have received a Federal award from another Federal award program
- Claiming expenses that have been or will be reimbursed under any Federal, State, or local government funding.

Louisiana's RFSI Funding Priorities

This is a competitive grant funding opportunity. To determine program funding priorities, LAFA-LDAF solicited comments from industry experts and stakeholders. Based on these comments, project proposals and goals should focus on the following priority areas:

- Projects that upgrade or create new facilities for processing, preserving, or storing agricultural products
- Projects that purchase freezing and cold storage equipment for agricultural products
- Projects that purchase food preparation and packing equipment for agricultural products
- Projects that purchase equipment for the distribution of agricultural products
- Projects that propose hiring term-limited personnel to assist with implementation activities that enhance capacity of middle-of-the-supply-chain infrastructure
- Projects that plan for Hazard Analysis Critical Control Points (HACCP) of other food safety or worker safety measures or equipment recommendations

Proposals will be evaluated and scored based on alignment with the grant purpose. Proposal evaluation categories include:

- Project Purpose
- Potential Impact
- Expected Measurable Outcome
- Work Plan (Large Infrastructure grant proposals only)
- Budget
- Achievability (Large Infrastructure grant proposals only)
- Overall Application
- Priority Recognition – if entity qualifies for one or more of the following prioritized groups
 - is historically underserved producer according to USDA
 - is a small, disadvantaged business according to SBA
 - is a member of Certified Louisiana
 - is in a project that proposes activities located in or serving at least one parish designated as at-risk or distressed community by the Distressed Community Index Map found at: <https://eig.org/distressed-communities/2022-dci-interactive-map/?path=county/22127&view=county>
 - project demonstrates positive environmental impacts in some capacity

Proposals that benefit Small and Underserved Business Owners, Historically Underserved Farmers or Ranchers or for other food businesses that qualify under the Small Business Administration (SBA) categories of Small Disadvantaged Business, Women Owned Small business, and Veteran-Owned Small Businesses are encouraged and will be given priority.

Types of Grant Proposals

LRFSIP will offer two types of grant competition opportunities for middle-of-the-food-supply-chain activities owners for this program:

- Large Infrastructure Grants (Grants for larger projects (including construction) ranging from \$100,000 to \$3 million funding; matching funds required)
- Special-Purpose Equipment-Only Grants (Grants for equipment purchases only; grants ranging from \$10,000 to \$100,000; **no** matching funds required)

Large Infrastructure Grants Matching Funds Requirements:

Large Infrastructure Grant recipients are required to contribute 50% of the total proposed project cost as a match to federal funding. This applies to all applicants except those who qualify for the reduced match.

Reduced Matching Funds – Historically Underserved Groups: For qualified grant applicants for the Large Infrastructure Grants, food businesses and entities that qualify under USDA designations of underserved groups or SBA categories of underserved groups listed below, the required match funding contribution or cost share is reduced to 25% of the project cost.

The qualifying categories for the reduced match rate include:

- Underserved producers as defined by USDA
- Small disadvantaged businesses, as defined by the Small Business Administration (SBA)

To determine if you qualify for the reduced match rate it is recommended you visit the following USDA and SBA websites:

- <https://www.nrcs.usda.gov/getting-assistance/underserved-farmers-ranchers>
- <https://www.sba.gov/federal-contracting/contracting-assistance-programs/small-disadvantaged-business>

Applicants must self-certify in their Infrastructure Grant proposals to being eligible for this reduced match.

Simplified Special-Purpose Equipment-Only Grants:

Awards for these projects will offer a simplified proposal to fund smaller grants between \$10,000 and \$100,000 for equipment purchases. The Simplified Special-Purpose Equipment Only option is a Fixed Price Grant, meaning it will fund only equipment purchases (will not fund any associated facility upgrades, staffing, or other costs), and the amount awarded will be equal to the cost of the equipment up to \$100,000. No match is required for this grant type.

Applicants are encouraged to apply for an amount of funding that:

- Is right sized to achieve their goals
- Is appropriate for the stage, capacity, and experience of their operation.
- Is achievable within the project timeline.

Reasonableness of the budget relative to the impact and achievability of the proposed projects will be key parts of scoring applications.

Program Goals

Each proposer will be required to select a project type that directly corresponds to USDA's RFSI program goals. Expected capacity-building goals will include:

1. Constructing a new facility.
2. Expansion or improvement of existing facilities.
3. Processing equipment units to be purchased and installed.
4. Processing equipment units modernized through upgrades, repairs, or retooling.
5. Aggregation, storage, and distribution units purchased and installed.
6. Aggregation, storage, and distribution units modernized through upgrades, repairs, or retooling.
7. Employees receiving training on new equipment and processes.
8. Employees receiving food safety training
9. Employees receiving worker safety training
10. New or improved wastewater management systems
11. New or improved information technology systems

Economic viability goals will include:

1. New jobs created
2. Agricultural producers who benefited from the new or improved processing, aggregation, storage or distribution capacity processing/aggregation/storage or distribution capacity
3. Products processed, aggregated, stored, or distributed
4. New value-added products developed
5. New market-outlets established

Proposal Requirements

Eligibility

To be eligible to apply for one of the competitive grants, the applicant must be a Louisiana-owned middle-of-the-food-supply-chain business or entity located and operated in Louisiana.

A middle-of-the-food-supply-chain business or entity would include those involved in processing, aggregation and/or distribution of specific foods. These specific foods include specialty crops, dairy, grains for human consumption, aquaculture, eggs, and honey. Meat, wild caught seafood, and poultry products are excluded from this project. More specifically, a middle-of-the-food-supply-chain businesses or entities eligible to apply include:

- Agricultural producers or processors, or groups of agricultural producers and processors
- Nonprofit organizations operating middle-of-the-supply-chain activities such as processing, aggregation, distribution of targeted agricultural products
- For-profit entities operating middle-of-the-supply-chain activities such as processing, aggregation, or distribution of targeted agricultural products, whose activities are primarily focused for the benefit of local and regional producers, and that meet the eligibility requirements of the SBA small business size standards are eligible.
 - For-profit entities must meet the eligibility requirements of the SBA small business size standards matched to industries described in the North American Industry Classification System (NAICS). For more information on these size standards, please visit [SBA's Size Standards webpage](#). For a quick check on whether your business qualifies, please use the [Size Standards Tool](#).
- Local government entities operating middle-of-the-supply-chain activities such as processing, aggregation, distribution of targeted agricultural products
- Tribal governments operating middle-of-the-supply-chain activities such as processing, aggregation, distribution of targeted agricultural products.
- Institutions such as schools, universities, or hospitals bringing producers together to establish cooperative or shared infrastructure or invest in equipment that will benefit multiple producers middle-of-the-supply-chain activities such as processing, aggregation, distribution of targeted agricultural product.

How to Apply

Step 1 – Go to LRFSIP website at <https://www.ldaf.la.gov/business/grants-funding/resilient-food-systems-infrastructure> and review the program information and additional resources thoroughly.

Step 2 – Determine if you are eligible and interested in applying for one of these two competitive grants

Step 3 – Determine which of the two types of grants you wish to apply for.

Step 4 – Download the grant application fillable form you are interested on to your computer.

Step 5 – Complete your proposal, keeping in mind the program information you have reviewed.

Step 6 – Submit/Email your completed proposal to RFSI@ldaf.state.la.us during the application period (between February 7, 2024, through April 15, 2023, by 4:30 PM). NO LATE APPLICATIONS ACCEPTED.

NOTE: Applicants are required to complete and submit their proposals using the RFSI Infrastructure Grant Proposal fillable form or the RFSI Equipment-Only Grant Proposal fillable form.

Required Documents

Applicants must apply to this RFP electronically. The electronic application and other required attachments for this RFP can be found at <https://www.ldaf.la.gov/business/grants-funding/resilient-food-systems-infrastructure>.

NOTE: Please submit all required forms as attachments in one email as your proposal package.

Table 2 includes the required forms for the Large Infrastructure Grant proposals. Table 3 includes the required forms for the Simplified Special-Purpose Equipment-Only Grant proposals.

Table 2. Required Forms for Large Infrastructure Grant Proposal

Required Form	Instructions
RFSI Proposal Cover Sheet	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Download the RFSI Proposal Cover Sheet to your computer from https://www.ldaf.la.gov/business/grants-funding/resilient-food-systems-infrastructure Complete the form in its entirety Attach in an email as a part of your proposal package.
RFSI Statements of Understanding	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Download the RFSI Statements of Understanding to your computer Complete the form in its entirety Scan your completed form in PDF format and email as a part of your proposal package.
RFSI Infrastructure Grant Proposal Grant Application (fillable form in PDF format)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Download the RFSI Infrastructure Grant fillable form (PDF format) to your computer from https://www.ldaf.la.gov/business/grants-funding/resilient-food-systems-infrastructure Complete the form in its entirety Email the fillable PDF version of the RFSI Infrastructure Grant Proposal Grant Application form as a part of your proposal package. DO NOT EMAIL A SCANNED COPY OF THE FILLABLE PDF FORM.
Match Verification Letter Template	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Download the RFSI Match Verification Letter Template (Microsoft Word document) to your computer from

	<p>https://www.ldaf.la.gov/business/grants-funding/resilient-food-systems-infrastructure</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Complete the template for EACH source of matching funds/resources • Ensure each letter is signed by an authorized organization representative from each source of matching funds • Upload a scan of the completed, signed Match Verification letter(s) in PDF format as a part of your proposal package
Evidence of Critical Resources & Infrastructure Template	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Download the RFSI Evidence of Critical Resources and infrastructure Letter Template (Microsoft Word document) to your computer from https://www.ldaf.la.gov/business/grants-funding/resilient-food-systems-infrastructure • Complete the template for EACH critical resource/piece of infrastructure (necessary land, buildings, or other resources) • Ensure each letter is signed by an authorized organization representative from each source of matching funds • Upload a scan of the completed, signed Evidence of Critical Resource & Infrastructure letter(s) in PDF format as a part of your proposal package
Cost Estimate of Equipment/Construction from Equipment/Contractor Vendor	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Upload a scanned copy of the proposed equipment cost estimate • Attach in an email as a part of your proposal package
USDA Environmental Questionnaire	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Download the USDA Environmental Questionnaire to your computer from https://www.ldaf.la.gov/business/grants-funding/resilient-food-systems-infrastructure • Complete the form in its entirety. • Attach in an email as a part of your proposal package.
Collaborator Organization Letter Template (if applicable)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Download the Collaborator Organization Letter Template to your computer • Share with your collaborators to use to express their support for your project • Ensure each letter completed and signed by an authorized collaborator organization representative • Upload a scan of the completed and signed Collaborator Organization Letters in PDF format and email as a part of your proposal package
Construction Documents (if construction or expansion of a building is included in project)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • If your project includes a construction component, provide design documents, supply lists, etc. that illustrate the scope of the construction project • Attach in an email as a part of your proposal package.

Table 3. Required Forms for the Simplified Special-Purpose Equipment Only Grant Proposal

Required Form	Instructions
RFSI Proposal Cover Sheet	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Download the RFSI Proposal Cover Sheet to your computer from https://www.ldaf.la.gov/business/grants-funding/resilient-food-systems-infrastructure • Complete the form in its entirety • Attach in an email as a part of your proposal package.
RFSI Statements of Understanding	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Download the RFSI Statements of Understanding to your computer • Complete the form in its entirety • Scan your completed form in PDF format and email as a part of your proposal package.
RFSI Equipment Only Grant Proposal Grant Application (fillable form in PDF format)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Download the RFSI Equipment Only Grant fillable form (PDF file) to your computer from https://www.ldaf.la.gov/business/grants-funding/resilient-food-systems-infrastructure • Complete the form in its entirety • Email the fillable PDF version of the RFSI Infrastructure Grant Proposal Grant Application form as a part of your proposal package. DO NOT EMAIL A SCAN OF THE FILLABLE PDF FORM.
Cost Estimate of Equipment from Equipment Vendor	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Upload a scanned copy of the proposed equipment cost estimate • Attach in an email as a part of your proposal package.
USDA Environmental Questionnaire	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Download the USDA Environmental Questionnaire to your computer from https://www.ldaf.la.gov/business/grants-funding/resilient-food-systems-infrastructure • Complete the form in its entirety. • Attach in an email as a part of your proposal package.

Guidance in Completing the Proposal

You can get guidance in completing a LRFSP proposal in several ways. They include:

- Calling LAFA-LDAF LRFSP 1-800 toll free phone number at 888-295-0081 to ask questions (line is available M-F between 9 AM – 3 PM)
- Emailing the LAFA-LDAF LRFSP team to ask questions at RFSI@ldaf.state.la.us
- Attending a LRFSP Proposal Writing Workshop in your region of the state (check website for future dates for Proposal Writing Workshops)
- Viewing a Proposal Writing Workshop Webinar at <https://www.ldaf.la.gov/business/grants-funding/resilient-food-systems-infrastructure>
- Louisiana Small Business Development Center (LSBDC): Free technical assistance is being offered through the LSBDC. Schedule a one-on-one 30 minute telephone consultation through the LRFSP webpage (<https://www.ldaf.la.gov/business/grants-funding/resilient-food-systems-infrastructure>)

Criteria for Evaluation

A. Competitive Project Descriptions

Project proposals most likely to be considered competitive will include the following elements:

- The project will meet an identified infrastructure need that correlate to at least one LRFSIP Funding Priority as described in the General Information Section
- The project will service the needs of historically underserved producers, processors, and small food businesses
- The project will be made available to or will incorporate product from multiple producers, processors, and/or small food businesses rather than benefit a singular entity
- The project is designed and implemented in a manner that will provide long-term middle-of-the-food-supply-chain opportunities to Louisiana producers, processors, and small food businesses
- The project will create positive economic impact by providing more and better markets for Louisiana agricultural products, support the development of value-added products for consumers, encourage fair prices and fair wages, and establish new and safe job opportunities.

Competitive Review Process for Proposals

Proposals will be scored by an independent, expert review panel that will use a scoresheet to assign points to application content under specific categories. Scoring categories for the large infrastructure project proposals will include Project Purpose, Potential Impact, Expected Measurable Outcome, Work Plan, Budget, Achievability, Overall Application with extra points credit for addressing key factors. Scoring categories for the Simplified Special-Purpose Equipment-Only Grants proposals will include Project Purpose, Potential Impact, Expected Measurable Outcome, Budget, Overall Application with extra points credit for addressing key factors. Multiple proposals by an entity can be submitted; however, only one proposal can receive RFSI funding.

After scoring the proposals, the Review Panel will meet as a group to discuss and recommend which proposals to submit to USDA for funding. The LRFSIP will prioritize funding to projects that:

- Address one of the six priority funding areas for Louisiana
- Are submitted by historically underserved producers as defined by USDA
- Are submitted by small, disadvantaged businesses as defined by Small Business Administration
- Offer family-supporting job quality and safe treatment of workers
- Focus on proposals that create value-added options for producers and consumers
- Demonstrate local support of the project
- Support distressed and at-risk communities (parishes) as defined by the Distressed Community Index
- Are submitted by cooperatives and producer or worker-owned enterprises.

Project Evaluation Criteria

Each project submitted by an eligible entity that addresses at least one of the Louisiana RFSI Program funding priorities will be reviewed and scored by the competitive review panel using the criteria listed below for the Large Infrastructure Project Grant Proposals and the Simplified Special-Purpose Equipment-Only Grants proposals.

LRFSIP Special-purpose, Equipment-only Grant Proposal Score Sheet

CRITERIA	MAX POINTS
Project Purpose	
Does this project address one of the program priorities listed in the RFP? List priority_____	10
How well does the applicant describe the current business operations being offered?	10
How well does the applicant define the specific need the requested equipment will address?	10
Potential Impact	
Does the project clearly demonstrate the equipment will have a direct benefit to local and regional producers, market outlets and more?	10
Expected Measurable Outcome	
Does the project indicate at least one quantifiable, measurable objective that is realistic, obtainable and supports the project purpose?	10
Budget	
Does requested equipment align with RFSI overarching goal of creating a more resilient middle-of-the-food-supply-chain in Louisiana?	10
Does the equipment justification clearly outlined how it will be used to achieve the objectives/outcomes of the project?	10
Are the expected benefits proportionate to the total investment?	10
Overall Application	
The extent to which the project will make an important contribution to enhance Louisiana's middle-of-the-food-supply-chain?	10
Is the application complete, answering all questions and providing sufficient detail?	10
TOTAL	100
Priority Recognition Points - Does the project address any of the following?	5
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Project directly benefits a member of a USDA's historically underserved group or SBA's small, disadvantaged group • Project serves more than a single beneficiary • Project is in at least one parish that is designated by DCI as at risk or distressed • Project demonstrates positive environmental impact in some capacity • Proposing entity is member of Certified Louisiana 	
GRAND TOTAL with Priority Recognition Points, if applicable	105

LRFSIP Large Infrastructure Project Grant Proposal Score Sheet

CRITERIA	MAX POINTS
Project Purpose	
How well does the applicant define the issue, problem, or need the project will address regarding Louisiana's middle-of-the-food-supply-chain?	5
Does this project address one of the program priorities listed in the RFP? List priority _____	5
Is this project relevant and timely to address resiliency in Louisiana's middle-of-the-food-supply-chain?	5
Is any external project support for the need for this project indicated?	5
Potential Impact	
Does the project clearly demonstrate how the project will have a direct benefit to and impact on Louisiana's middle-of-the-food-supply-chain?	5
Expected Measurable Outcome	
Does the project have at least one quantifiable, measurable objective that is realistic and obtainable and supports the project purpose?	5
Are the project's goals and objectives realistic and obtainable?	5
Work Plan	
Are the tasks and activities related to accomplishing middle-of-the-food-supply-chain impact for Louisiana?	5
Is the timeline reasonable to successfully accomplish the project by the LRFSIP deadline?	5
How well do the activities match the needs or problems of Louisiana's middle-of-the-food-supply-chain?	5
Budget	
Do requested budget items correlate to the purpose/goals/objectives of the project?	5
Is the budget narrative clearly outlined and itemized with a justification of expenses?	5
Are the expected benefits proportionate to the total investment?	10
Achievability	
Is the project realistically achievable within the time frame presented?	10
Overall Application	
Does the project have adequate management to endure proper oversight and administration?	5
Does the overall application present a clear, focused, and viable plan to enhance Louisiana's middle-of-the-food-supply-chain?	5
The extent to which the project will make an important contribution to enhance Louisiana's middle-of-the-food-supply-chain?	5
Is the application complete, answering all questions and providing sufficient detail?	5
TOTAL	100
Priority Recognition Points - Does the project address any of the following? <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Project directly benefits a member of a USDA's historically underserved group or SBA's small, disadvantaged group • Project serves more than a single beneficiary • Project is in at least one parish that is designated by DCI as at risk or distressed • Project demonstrates positive environmental impact in some capacity • Proposing entity is member of Certified Louisiana 	5
GRAND TOTAL with Priority Recognition Points, if applicable	105

Award Administration Information

Award Notices

Upon completion of the competitive review process, selected proposals will be sent to USDA AMS with an updated copy of Louisiana's State Plan. Final determination of approved projects and award amounts will be facilitated by USDA - AMS. Successful applicants will be notified after final approval of the Infrastructure Grant application. Successful applicants will be required to register with SAM.gov and receive a unique entity ID (UEI) prior to receiving a project award.

Unsuccessful Applicants

Unsuccessful applicants will be notified by LAFA-LDAF LRFSIP personnel via email as soon as possible after awards are approved by USDA - AMS. Unsuccessful applicants will be provided with review panel consensus comments regarding their proposals at the request of the applicant.

Reporting Requirements

Funded projects will be subject to data collection on a quarterly basis. The LRFSIP Manager will solicit performance measure data from each project via email, phone calls, teleconferencing, and/or site visits.

Agency Contacts

Applicants and other interested parties are encouraged to contact LRFSIP personnel by email (RFSI@ldaf.state.la.us) or phone (866-295-0081) with questions about the program. Additionally, for more information, please visit the LRFSIP webpage at <https://www.ldaf.la.gov/business/grants-funding/resilient-food-systems-infrastructure>.