

**RESILIENT FOOD SYSTEMS INFRASTRUCTURE PROGRAM  
QUESTIONS AND ANSWERS (Q&A)  
February 22, 2024**

The California Department of Food and Agriculture (CDFA) has issued an updated Resilient Food Systems Infrastructure Program (RFSI) Request for Proposals (RFP) effective January 11, 2024. To view the updated RFP, please visit the [CDFA RFSI website](http://www.cdfa.ca.gov/rfsi) ([www.cdfa.ca.gov/rfsi](http://www.cdfa.ca.gov/rfsi)).

For information on these updates, please refer to Questions 2-4 of the [AmpliFund section](#) of this Q&A.

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**RESILIENT FOOD SYSTEMS INFRASTRUCTURE PROGRAM  
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**GENERAL QUESTIONS**

1. Q. Can projects take place before RFSI funding is awarded?  
A. RFSI projects can begin no earlier than October 1, 2024, and must end by February 26, 2027. All costs outside of these dates would be considered unallowable. Please refer to the [Matching Funds section](#) for guidance on pre-award cost share. *(response edited January 26, 2024)*
2. Q. Can an organization with multiple facilities submit multiple applications to RFSI?  
A. No. Each organization may submit one application to RFSI, total.
3. Q. Are there any restrictions regarding common ownership of multiple businesses, entities, or organizations being limited to a single application?  
A. Given that each applicant organization has its own Unique Entity Identifier (UEI), each organization is eligible to apply for RFSI funding (one application per organization). However, each applicant organization must meet the entity eligibility requirements, especially the for-profit parameters detailed in Section 1.5.2 of the U.S. Department of Agriculture (USDA)'s [Program Scope and Requirements](https://www.ams.usda.gov/sites/default/files/media/RFSI_ProgramScopeandRequirements.pdf) ([https://www.ams.usda.gov/sites/default/files/media/RFSI\\_ProgramScopeandRequirements .pdf](https://www.ams.usda.gov/sites/default/files/media/RFSI_ProgramScopeandRequirements.pdf)).
4. Q. Can projects have multiple parts or facets, such as both increasing storage and seeking energy savings?  
A. Yes, RFSI Infrastructure Grant projects may combine multiple elements that support the middle of the supply chain.
5. Q. How does RFSI define "small business"?  
A. RFSI uses the U.S. Small Business Administration (SBA)'s guidelines to determine whether an organization qualifies as a small business. CDFA recommends visiting the [SBA website](https://www.sba.gov/document/support-table-size-standards) (<https://www.sba.gov/document/support-table-size-standards>) for more detail.
6. Q. How does RFSI define a "beginning farmer"?  
A. USDA defines beginning farmers as an individual or entity that has not operated a farm for more than 10 years and who substantially participates in the operation.
7. Q. Will the RFSI Office Hours be recorded?  
A. Office Hours are intended to be more conversational, as a resource for individuals to submit questions or discuss their application. As such, Office Hours will not be recorded. However, materials or shorter presentations developed for Office Hours will be made available on the [RFSI website](http://www.cdca.ca.gov/rfsi) ([www.cdca.ca.gov/rfsi](http://www.cdca.ca.gov/rfsi)) if they are helpful to all prospective applicants.
8. Q. Are RFSI grants funded through the State of California or through federal funds?  
A. RFSI grants are federal funds. RFSI is a USDA, Agricultural Marketing Service (AMS), program and will be administered in California by CDFA.

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9. Q. What type of support does CDFA offer during office hours? Will CDFA review my proposal prior to submission?  
A. Office Hours will include brief presentations on topics of interest; these will also be available on the CDFA website. Office Hours are also an opportunity to submit questions to CDFA. CDFA is not able to review proposals prior to submission.
10. Q. Will RFSI have multiple application periods?  
A. At this time, RFSI has funding for only one application period and is planned as a one-time program.
11. Q. Can two organizations apply cooperatively?  
A. No; one organization must apply as CDFA will enter into a Grant Agreement with only one organization per grant. Cooperating organizations may participate in a project as contractors or consultants at the applicant organization's discretion.
12. Q. How does RFSI define "local" and "regional" producers?  
A. To conform with the USDA AMS definition of local and regional foods, producers should operate where the distance between the product origin and point of sale is at most 400 miles, or both the final market and the product origin are within the same State, United States territory, or Tribal land. Additionally, applicants should demonstrate in their proposal that their project will support infrastructure in the middle-of-the-supply-chain for California food and farm businesses and other eligible entities.
13. Q. Is it a requirement that all commodities processed be grown in California?  
A. The purpose of RFSI is to create more and better processing options for local and regional producers. While there is not a firm requirement that all items processed be grown or produced in California, California producers and processors should be the primary beneficiaries of RFSI projects. Applicants should make the project's benefit to local and regional producers clear in their proposal. Projects must be physically located in California to be eligible.

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14. Q. Will applicants be notified if their application has been selected to go to USDA?  
A. Yes, CDFA will notify applicants if a project is submitted to USDA. CDFA anticipates all projects submitted to USDA will need some level of revision and CDFA will work with applicants to amend any areas necessary.
15. Q. Are RFSI projects required to support historically underserved communities?  
A. There is no requirement that RFSI projects support underserved communities. Additional points are added to the scoring of projects that do support these communities; please refer to the scoring rubrics in the [RFSI RFP](https://www.cdfa.ca.gov/rfsi/docs/rfsi_request_for_proposals.pdf) ([https://www.cdfa.ca.gov/rfsi/docs/rfsi\\_request\\_for\\_proposals.pdf](https://www.cdfa.ca.gov/rfsi/docs/rfsi_request_for_proposals.pdf)) for more detail.

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16. Q. Will projects be disqualified for containing a small number of unallowable costs and/or activities?
- A. CDFA will evaluate projects on a case-by-case basis to determine eligibility. Projects with a small number of unallowable activities and/or costs may continue forward to Technical Review if CDFA believes the project could still be successful with the removal of those costs/activities. Projects with unallowable costs/activities that are essential to the project or make up a significant portion of the budget are liable to be disqualified.
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**ELIGIBILITY**

1. Q. Is aquaculture (farm-raised fish, shellfish, seaweed, etc.) an eligible commodity for RFSI funding?
- A. Yes, farm-raised aquaculture projects may be funded by RFSI, including equipment to process these commodities. Note that wild-caught fish or seafood is not eligible for RFSI funding. USDA defines aquaculture as the production of aquatic organisms under controlled conditions throughout all or part of their lifecycle.
2. Q. Are distribution companies eligible for RFSI funding?
- A. Yes, organizations that aggregate and/or distribute eligible commodities are eligible for RFSI funding.
3. Q. Are there any resources for projects working with meat and poultry?
- A. Yes, CDFA has compiled a list of resources available to the meat and poultry industry. Please email [grants@cdfa.ca.gov](mailto:grants@cdfa.ca.gov) if you would like to obtain a copy of this resource.
4. Q. Are bakeries eligible for RFSI funding?
- A. Baking activities may be eligible as creating value-added products. Note that processing activities (such as baking) and aggregation/distribution activities are eligible for RFSI funding. Activities related to markets or consumers, such as marketing and promotion, renovation of retail space, or other activities related to selling baked goods would not be eligible.
5. Q. Does an organization's income affect RFSI eligibility?
- A. For-profit entities must meet the eligibility requirements of the SBA small business size standards. Applicants should use the [SBA's Size Standards Tool](https://www.sba.gov/size-standards/index.html) (<https://www.sba.gov/size-standards/index.html>) to determine their eligibility; for-profit organizations which exceed the numbers calculated in that tool are not eligible for RFSI funding. *(response edited January 26, 2024)*
6. Q. Are there any resources for projects working with either the production and harvest stage or the retail and consumers stage of the food supply chain?
- A. Yes, CDFA has compiled a list of resources available to those working outside of the middle of the supply chain. Please email [grants@cdfa.ca.gov](mailto:grants@cdfa.ca.gov) if you would like to obtain a copy of this resource.

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7. Q. Is there a requirement for years in operation for an organization to be eligible?  
A. When applying for the required UEI, the federal government will take steps to verify an entity's existence. Provided an entity can obtain a UEI, there is no requirement for length of time in operation.
8. Q. Are partners allowed to apply individually to RFSI?  
A. If the two projects have the same end goal, CDFA considers this to be one project. As such, the applicants should apply together, with one entity being the lead organization. The other may act as a contractor or consultant, at the discretion of the lead applicant. If two entities will work together on one project, and one of the two entities would like to apply separately for an entirely separate project, this may be allowable. CDFA determines projects as separate if their goals are unique and if either project could be successful even if the other project is not awarded funding.
9. Q. If an applicant qualifies as a producer, processor, or group thereof, are they required to also qualify as an SBA small business?  
A. Yes. The SBA Size Standard tool is applicable to any for-profit businesses - including producers, processors, and groups thereof - to assist in determining eligibility.
10. Q. Does the processing, aggregation, and/or distribution of California Indian traditional foods fall within RFSI requirements?  
A. RFSI does not focus on the production or harvesting of commodities but the post-harvest activities within the middle of the supply chain. All eligible commodities must be for human consumption (excluding meat, poultry, and wild-caught seafood) in order to be deemed eligible; distribution directly to the consumer is not allowable.

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11. Q. Are eggs an eligible commodity for RFSI?  
A. Eggs are an eligible commodity under RFSI; poultry for meat is not.
12. Q. Are Food Banks eligible entities for RFSI funding?  
A. Yes, Food Banks are eligible entities. Applicants are responsible for demonstrating that the activities undertaken in the RFSI project support the middle of the supply chain and create new and/or better processing and/or distribution infrastructure for California farmers. Costs supporting direct-to-consumer activities or spaces dedicated to these activities are not allowable under RFSI.
13. Q. Can value-added products created with RFSI support contain ineligible commodities?  
A. Meat, poultry, and wild-caught fish and seafood may be included in negligible amounts in value-added products under RFSI. If a value-added product contains a notable percentage of ineligible commodities, costs should be pro-rated accordingly, with RFSI funds supporting only eligible commodities.

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14. Q. Are wineries eligible?  
A. Wineries are an eligible entity as long as the proposed activities support the middle-of-the supply chain. Activities associated with growing and harvesting grapes would not be allowable. Any activities involving retail, consumers, marketing, etc. would also not be allowable.
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**PROJECT TYPES**

1. Q. Can RFSI funding be used to support growing or harvesting activities? What about retail activities?  
A. No, RFSI funding cannot be used in support of growing, harvesting, or retail activities. RFSI funding is designed to support the middle of the supply chain; that is, processing, aggregation, and/or distribution activities.
2. Q. Can RFSI funding be used to fund a project that transports donated food to recipients in other locations?  
A. RFSI funds cannot be used to deliver directly to consumers, as this is not considered to be the middle of the supply chain. Transportation between aggregation centers or from a distribution center to a market would be allowable.
3. Q. Is the construction of wastewater management structures an allowable RFSI project?  
A. Yes, wastewater management structures may be constructed using RFSI funds.
4. Q. Can RFSI funding be used to support educational programs designed to help create businesses?  
A. RFSI funding is not designed to support the creation of new businesses or the development of business plans. CDFA recommends applicants visit the [Southwest Regional Food Business Center's website \(www.https://swfoodbiz.org/\)](https://swfoodbiz.org/) to learn more about this program, which does have funding available to support business plan development.
5. Q. Can RFSI funds be used to purchase in-field equipment?  
A. Yes, equipment designed for in-field use is allowable, provided it is used for processing, rather than harvesting, activities.
6. Q. Can non-profit organizations use RFSI funds to support the activities of the organizations with which they work?  
A. Non-profit organizations may use RFSI funds in support of middle-of-the-supply-chain activities such as processing, aggregation, and distribution. Note that all commodities must be eligible for RFSI funding. It is the responsibility of the organization awarded a grant to ensure that RFSI funds are not used in support of unallowable or ineligible costs, activities, or commodities.
7. Q. Can RFSI funds be used to purchase food directly from farms?  
A. No, food purchases are not allowable with RFSI funds. RFSI is designed to build and support infrastructure in the middle of the supply chain.

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8. Q. Can an Equipment-Only Grant be used to fund multiple pieces of equipment?  
A. No, Equipment-Only Grants can be used to purchase one piece of equipment only, along with any associated costs necessary to that equipment such as tax, delivery, installation costs, etc. Note that upgrading facilities (such as electrical upgrades to accommodate new equipment) or refurbishing equipment are not eligible costs for Equipment-Only Grants; equipment purchased must be ready to use. Related accessories to the equipment may be allowable; the proposal should make it clear that these accessories are necessary to accomplish project goals. *(response edited February 9, 2024)*
9. Q. Can RFSI funds be used to purchase used or pre-owned equipment?  
A. Yes, pre-owned equipment may be purchased, provided it is in good working order.
10. Q. Is solar installation an allowable project?  
A. Solar installation may be an appropriate activity for an Infrastructure Grant project if the installation supports middle-of-the-supply-chain activities. Note that Equipment-Only Grants cannot cover the costs of any upgrades, such as to electrical systems, that may be required due to installation of solar panels.
11. Q. Is program development allowable with RFSI funds?  
A. RFSI is designed to increase market opportunities for local and regional producers operating within the middle of the supply chain. Generally, program development is not appropriate for RFSI; some simple employee-training programs (such as training employees on new equipment or processes adopted as a result of RFSI funding) may be allowable.
12. Q. Are construction projects required to be "shovel ready"?  
A. No. Reviewers may consider whether the completion of a project during the grant duration is feasible.
13. Q. Can RFSI funds fund renovations of an entire building or facility used exclusively for middle-of-the-supply chain activities, or only for those areas actively used for the activities?  
A. Renovations to a building may be allowable, if justified and reasonable. The renovations, construction or build being conducted should relate to the overall goal of the project to create more and better market opportunities for local and regional producers and processors. The application should demonstrate how all proposed construction will benefit the middle of the supply chain. The space renovations/improvements or build outside of the processing area (or other active-use area) must be reasonable, allowable, and allocable to the scope of work being proposed and the middle of the supply chain activities.
14. Q. Is advertising allowable under RFSI?  
A. Advertising is generally considered to belong to the retail/consumers stage of the supply chain and is thus generally not allowable under RFSI. Activities associated with branding, advertising, and/or marketing in order to increase sales of a project or subscribers to a service would not be allowed. Limited outreach costs may be allowable if they support project goals.

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15. Q. Is aggregating/processing food to be sold to points of consumption, such as schools or restaurants, allowable under RFSI?  
A. Direct-to-consumer activities are not allowable under RFSI; selling ready-to-eat meals directly to the consumer is not eligible. Selling ingredients, products, or packaged goods may be allowable.
16. Q. Are projects primarily or exclusively focused on education allowable under RFSI?  
A. Projects focused on general education or training activities are not eligible under RFSI. Minimal training and education may be allowable, such as training employees on new equipment or technology purchased with RFSI funds or education on new processes that enhance worker safety or support compliance with the Food Safety Modernization Act (FSMA).
17. Q. Are projects primarily or exclusively focused on research allowable under RFSI?  
A. USDA has indicated that RFSI is not appropriate for research-based projects. While small amounts of research or other investigation may be appropriate as part of a larger Infrastructure Grant project, projects focused primarily or exclusively on research and/or development are not allowable under RFSI.
18. Q. Can a single organization implement one project across multiple locations or facilities?  
A. Yes, as long as all activities fall within the middle of the supply chain, are aligned with RFSI program scope and requirements, and are contained within one application/scope of work.
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**FUNDING PRIORITIES**

No questions at this time.

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**AMPLIFUND**

1. Q. Are there word/character count maximums for the written questions in the application?  
A. There are no word or character limits in AmpliFund text boxes. Applicants should limit responses to the topic in question and provide clear, concise responses. Executive Summaries longer than 250 words may be edited by CDFA prior to publication.
2. Q. The AmpliFund application form requests additional explanation in the Funding Priorities section and in the Project Beneficiaries section; however, there is no text box to enter this information in these sections of the application form. How can applicants provide this explanation?  
A. CDFA has decided that this information will no longer be required and has updated the RFP, effective January 11, 2024, to reflect this. Please disregard this instruction on the AmpliFund application form.



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3. Q. How should applicants upload documents, such as copies of their Negotiated Indirect Cost Rate Agreement (NICRA) or letters of support?  
A. Applicants should upload any and all supplemental documents via the upload field on the Budget page of the AmpliFund application.
4. Q. The link to the California Senate and Assembly Districts finder is broken on the AmpliFund application. Where can applicants find their District numbers?  
A. CDFA apologizes for the inconvenience and recommends using this link: <https://findyourrep.legislature.ca.gov/>.
5. Q. If an applicant notices an error on a submitted application, is it possible to withdraw the submitted application and resubmit?  
A. It is possible for CDFA to manually un-submit applications. Please email [grants@cdfa.ca.gov](mailto:grants@cdfa.ca.gov) as soon as possible with your organization name and application title. Note that processing may take several days; CDFA recommends thoroughly checking all applications prior to submission to avoid these delays.
6. Q. If an organization has not obtained a UEI at the time of application, what should be put in the required field in AmpliFund?  
A. A UEI is not required at the time of application but will be required at the time of grant execution if a proposal is selected for funding. CDFA recommends that if an organization has not begun the process of obtaining a UEI, they do so as soon as possible. When applying, if an organization does not have a UEI, input zeros (0) in the required field.

***New Questions: February 22, 2024***

7. Q. AmpliFund provides error messages when applicants add Matching Funds to a Track 2, Equipment-Only Grant in order to cover costs above the funding maximum of \$100,000. How should applicants proceed?  
A. CDFA is aware of this issue and apologizes for the inconvenience. Since the funding limit for Equipment-Only Grants is set at \$100,000 maximum, applications that include optional Matching Funds are being frozen. CDFA advises that applicants remove the Cash Match contribution from the Project Information page and from the budget line item, so that the Total Award Budget sets to \$100,000. In the Description field for the item, applicants should include: "The actual cost of the item is \$xxx,xxx - applicant will provide the difference above \$100,000 in Matching Funds, Cash Match." (Please replace the "\$xxx,xxx" with the actual cost of the item requested.)
8. Q. On the CDFA Intake Form, applicants are instructed to enter "all" if the project is in more than one Senate and Assembly District. Given that "all" is not available in the drop-down menu, how should applicants proceed?  
A. CDFA apologizes for the inconvenience; applicants should select the Senate and Assembly districts for the location or mailing address of the project. If selected for funding, CDFA will work with applicants to ensure that field is corrected before submission to USDA.

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**APPLICATION**

1. Q. Are applicants required to disclose the use of an independent grant writer?  
A. Yes, grant writers must be disclosed to prevent possible conflicts of interest, regardless of whether an individual grant writer or a grant writing organization is used.
2. Q. Are letters of support required?  
A. Letters of support are not required but may be included. All uploads should be done via the upload field on the Budget page of the AmpliFund application.
3. Q. In the Project Objectives section for Infrastructure Grants, what description is required for the stated objectives?  
A. Applications should show that the project will be able to meet its stated objectives. This can be done in several ways, such as a list of activities in support of objectives, a narrative description of how each objective will be met, discussing the qualifications of those who will work on the project, etc.
4. Q. If an applicant is not using a grant writer, what should be entered in the "Submitter Information" section?  
A. The Submitter Information section should include the contact details of whoever is submitting the application, whether that be the applicant themselves, a grant writer, a partner organization, etc.
5. Q. In the Track 2, Equipment-Only Grant application, what number is expected in the "#" column next to "Product Type" in the "Type of Agricultural Food Products Processed with the Equipment" table?  
A. The number should quantify the number of eligible foods that will be processed with the equipment. Applicants may provide the level of detail that best fits their application, e.g., "3 - lemons, limes, and oranges" or "1 - citrus." A good rule of thumb is to ask if a reasonable reader would find the answer to be justifiable and complete.
6. Q. In the Track 2, Equipment-Only Grant application, where should an applicant outline the project objectives, goals, and desired outcomes?  
A. The proposal should make the project objectives/goals/desired outcomes clear throughout the application. If additional justification is required for requested costs, this clarification may be done in the Budget description.
7. Q. To whom should letters of support be addressed?  
A. "CDFA" would be the best choice; however, "To whom it may concern" would suffice. Recipients will not be scored based upon the addressee of letters of support; letters of support are not a requirement of RFSI.

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8. Q. What should applicants include in the "External Project Support" section of the application?  
A. Applicants should name external organizations that support the proposed project and briefly describe why they do so. Note that external stakeholders cannot include the applicant organization or any planned contractors/consultants.
9. Q. How much detail should applicants include in the narrative sections of the proposal?  
A. Applicants should respond to each question as concisely as possible while still providing all necessary detail and fully answering each question in the application.
10. Q. The distressed score table allows for five project areas that will be impacted by the grant. How should an applicant proceed if their project will work in more than five project areas?  
A. CDFA recommends selecting the five zip codes of primary impact, including the one where the project is physically located.
11. Q. How long should the Executive Summary be?  
A. The Executive Summary should include a one-sentence summary of the proposed project, which may then be expanded upon in the rest of the statement. Executive Summaries longer than 250 words may be edited at CDFA's discretion.
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**PROJECT BENEFICIARIES**

1. Q. Is it necessary that all expected Project Beneficiaries fit a category, such as underserved farmers and ranchers, to state that the project will benefit that category?  
A. No. Applicants should select all beneficiary categories that will be supported by their project. There is no requirement that each beneficiary match each selected category.
2. Q. How should applicants determine the number of beneficiaries for a proposed project?  
A. Applicants should provide their best estimate of the number of unique individuals that will benefit from a project. Note that employees of the applicant organization and/or contractors or cooperators should not be included as beneficiaries.
3. Q. Can entities, rather than individuals, be listed as beneficiaries?  
A. CDFA recognizes that it may be difficult to determine the precise number of individuals associated with a business entity. Applicants may include small businesses as individual entities at their discretion.
4. Q. Are beneficiaries subject to size requirements?  
A. Beneficiaries are at the discretion of the applicant and do not have restrictions based on entity size.

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5. Q. Do beneficiaries need to be in the middle-of-the-supply chain?  
A. Any external entities or individuals that receive a benefit from the project can be listed as a beneficiary at the applicant's discretion. Beneficiaries may be outside of the middle-of-the-supply chain, including growers, consumers, etc.
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**PERFORMANCE MEASURES**

1. Q. Can Performance Measures and Project Beneficiaries be made of the same individuals?  
A. This depends on the Performance Measure(s) selected. Some Performance Measures may include those listed as Project Beneficiaries. Note that employees of the applicant organization and/or contractors cannot be included in Project Beneficiaries, but may be included in the Performance Measures, if appropriate.

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2. Q. How should applicants count new products for the purpose of the Performance Measures?  
A. Performance Measures are at the discretion of the applicant and must be reported upon if awarded funding. It would be reasonable to consider serving new farmers to be processing a new product. Regarding the number processed, it may be more reasonable to track and report upon the number of new sources than the individual count of crops.
3. Q. How does RFSI define "new markets"?  
A. There is no specific USDA definition pertaining to new markets. A new market or new stream of revenue may potentially be found in the expansion of an already existing market or product line.
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**BUDGET AND COSTS**

1. Q. What costs are allowable construction costs? Can construction costs include design costs?  
A. Construction costs can include administrative and legal expenses, structures, relocation expenses and payments, architectural and engineering fees, project inspection fees, site work, demolition and removal, construction, and miscellaneous expenses related to modernizing or expanding a new or existing facility. Architectural fees can include those associated with design.
2. Q. Can contractors or consultants be used to complete RFSI projects?  
A. Yes, contractual or consultant costs are allowable for Infrastructure Grants. Please reference the "Proposal Questions and Scoring" section of the [RFSI RFP](https://www.cdfa.ca.gov/rfsi/docs/rfsi_request_for_proposals.pdf) ([https://www.cdfa.ca.gov/rfsi/docs/rfsi\\_request\\_for\\_proposals.pdf](https://www.cdfa.ca.gov/rfsi/docs/rfsi_request_for_proposals.pdf)) for more information on the requirements for contractual costs.

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3. Q. Are Infrastructure Grant applicants required to submit documentation to substantiate the costs of special purpose equipment?  
A. Yes, applicants should submit documentation to substantiate the costs of each piece of equipment, which can include contracts, catalog pricing, or binding quotes provided by licensed commercial entities.
4. Q. How should applicants estimate a price for the application if the price is highly variable? Can costs or items requested later be adjusted, should a project be awarded funding?  
A. RFSI is reimbursement-based. When grant recipients submit receipts to the program, they will be reimbursed the actual amount they paid. CDFA recommends requests be reasonable and supported by appropriate substantiating documentation.
5. Q. Can costs or items requested be adjusted during the grant duration, if a project is awarded funding?  
A. Yes, as long as the changes are reasonable, and the original goals of the project are met. Note that budgets cannot be increased after funds are awarded.
6. Q. How much detail should applicants include to support their requested budget?  
A. CDFA recommends providing as much detail, support, and documentation as available at the time of application. It is understood that exact contractors or consultants may not be known, costs of equipment and supplies may fluctuate, employees may leave or join an organization, etc.
7. Q. If a project or facility may benefit ineligible commodities (e.g., a processing facility that will process both vegetables and meat) or stages of the supply chain (e.g., a building holding both processing and retail facilities), what should applicants do?  
A. Applicants should demonstrate that robust tracking mechanisms are in place to ensure that RFSI funds do not support unallowable costs. Funds can be divided proportionally based on a reasonable system, such as square footage for construction projects, receipts of actual costs paid for supplies, hours worked for staff time, etc.
8. Q. Are applicants required to request fringe benefits costs for salaried employees included in the Budget?  
A. Fringe benefits are not required. Fringe benefits can be included as in-kind cost sharing to meet match requirements at an applicant's discretion.
9. Q. Can applicants include a fee rate, wrap fee, fee for service, etc. rather than salaries and fringe benefits in the project budget?  
A. Applicants are entitled to reimbursement for actual costs related to execution of the grant agreement, including salaries, fringe, and indirect costs. However, applicants are not entitled to profit or revenue for performance of grant activities by charging fee-based rates as an alternative to actual salaries.
10. Q. Can contingency costs be included in the budget?  
A. Contingency funds may not be included in the budget. Applicants may make realistic estimates of expected or anticipated costs when completing their budget.

**RESILIENT FOOD SYSTEMS INFRASTRUCTURE PROGRAM**  
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11. Q. Are National Environmental Policy Act (NEPA) review costs allowable under RFSI?  
A. If NEPA review costs are necessary, these costs can be included in G. Contractual.
12. Q. Should additional costs such as delivery, installation and tax be included in the cost of the equipment or as a separate budget line item?  
A. Applicants should provide as much detail as is available to them at the time of application. If the installation costs are included in the quote/invoice as the total cost, that should be sufficient documentation to support the additional cost as long as it is necessary for the use of the equipment.

***New Questions: February 22, 2024***

13. Q. Can grant writing or grant consulting fees be included in an RFSI project budget?  
A. Grant writing fees could potentially be included in a Track 1, Infrastructure Grant project as pre-award Matching Funds, provided they are included in the submitted project budget. Please see [Matching Funds](#), Question 5, for more information on pre-award costs. Post-award grant management or consulting fees may be reasonable to include in an Infrastructure Grant budget. Track 2, Equipment-Only Grants, can be used only to purchase one (1) piece of equipment; consulting fees may not be included in the budget for Equipment-Only Grants.
14. Q. Are there any restrictions on the age of construction quotes, architectural drawings, etc. that may be used to support an RFSI proposal?  
A. There are no firm restrictions; applicants should consider whether a reasonable reader would find the existing documents to have been created recently enough to be meaningful. Applicants may reasonably account for inflation when estimating costs based off older estimates/documents and should describe this in their application.
15. Q. Can an applicant submit construction or equipment costs under one line item on the budget?  
A. An applicant may submit construction or equipment costs under one line item in the budget, provided the substantiating documentation is more detailed and contains a sufficient breakdown of costs.
16. Q. How should an applicant include a budget item where that item has a credit, rebate, incentive, etc. associated with the cost?  
A. CDFA recommends applicants list the cost as the amount the applicant will pay out-of-pocket (cost minus any credits/rebates/incentives).
17. Q. Is employee housing allowable under Fringe Benefits?  
A. Employee housing may be allowable in Fringe Benefits, if consistent with the applicant's existing policy and used for employees working in support of RFSI projects. USDA has issued guidance that building and/or refurbishing employee housing is not eligible for RFSI.
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**MATCHING FUNDS**

1. Q. If an applicant is an organization that contains or represents historically underserved farmers and ranchers, disadvantaged small businesses, women-owned small businesses, and/or veteran-owned small businesses, is that organization eligible for the reduced match requirement of 25 percent?  
A. Yes. Historically underserved farmers and ranchers, disadvantaged small businesses, women-owned small businesses, and/or veteran-owned small businesses are eligible for the reduced match requirement of 25 percent. Other organization types, including non-profit organizations and cooperatives, may be eligible for reduced match if 51 percent or greater of their owners/operators/board of directors meets the relevant criteria. Please note that this must represent the makeup of the organization itself, not the communities the organization serves. *(response edited January 26, 2024)*
  
2. Q. If an applicant organization qualifies as a small business, are they eligible for the reduced match requirement of 25 percent?  
A. Only certain small businesses are eligible for reduced Matching Funds requirements. These include disadvantaged small businesses, women-owned small businesses, and veteran-owned small businesses.
  
3. Q. What are examples of matching funds?  
A. Match may consist of cash match, in-kind contributions, or any combination thereof. Note that all costs must be allowable under the grant conditions; costs such as construction costs, salary costs, equipment costs, the cost of hiring a contractor/consultant, etc. are all allowable and thus qualify as matching costs while, for example, land purchases are not allowable and thus cannot be used as matching funds.
  
4. Q. Should matching funds be designated specifically to the funded project?  
A. All matching funds will be subject to the same administrative requirements as grant funds. That is, matching funds must be treated and tracked like grant funds.
  
5. Q. Can matching funds be spent before the grant is awarded?  
A. Pre-award costs may be allowable with prior approval; all pre-award costs must adhere to Section 8.0 of the USDA, AMS [General Terms and Conditions](https://www.ams.usda.gov/sites/default/files/media/FY2023_GeneralTermsandConditions.pdf) ([https://www.ams.usda.gov/sites/default/files/media/FY2023\\_GeneralTermsandConditions.pdf](https://www.ams.usda.gov/sites/default/files/media/FY2023_GeneralTermsandConditions.pdf)). These costs and associated activities must be included in the recipient's project narrative and budget justification as pre-award matching funds to be approved. No costs incurred prior to the submission of an application will be approved.

All costs incurred before the award are at the potential recipient's risk; the incurrence of pre-award costs in anticipation of an award imposes no obligation on USDA, AMS, to award funds for such costs.



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6. Q. Are applicants required to have Matching Funds in-hand at the time of application?  
A. Matching Funds that have been firmly committed to a project may be included in a proposal, at the applicant's discretion. Note that, should a project be awarded funding, the applicant organization will be responsible for meeting any and all Matching Funds requirements, even if an expected source of funding becomes unavailable. The Technical Review Committee may consider whether a project has Matching Funds in-hand or firmly committed when judging that project's feasibility. Applications that are selected for funding will be required to submit Letters of Verification for all Matching Funds prior to being awarded funding.
7. Q. When will matching funds be required, should a project be awarded funding?  
A. CDFA is anticipating a requirement that each invoice contain proportional match. That is, if RFSI is billed \$30,000 on a particular invoice, the grant recipient would be required to provide documentation supporting a matching funds expenditure of \$30,000 over the same period (\$10,000 for those eligible for reduced matching funds requirements).
8. Q. Can rent be used as Matching Funds?  
A. Tenants may claim rent as in-kind costs, given the rent is a fair market value and the rent is prorated only to include the space being used in support of project goals. The land/property owner can use income from rent as cash match, given the space supports the goals of the proposed project and the rent is a fair market value.
9. Q. Can improvements made to a space by tenants in support of project goals be considered match?  
A. These costs may be considered in-kind match. Costs should be reasonable, and applications should demonstrate they directly support project goals.
10. Q. Are the applicant's personnel hours allowable as in-kind match under RFSI?  
A. The value of an organization owner's or other staff time may be allowable as in-kind match so long as the hours counted are exclusively in support of RFSI activities and are appropriately tracked.

***New Questions: February 22, 2024***

11. Q. Are applicants able to contribute more than the minimum required Matching Funds to an Infrastructure Grant project?  
A. Matching Funds may exceed the minimum requirement.
12. Q. Can applicants use pre-existing equipment as Matching Funds?  
A. Applicants may use the value of the use of equipment they owned prior to the submission of an RFSI proposal as Matching Funds. The justification for this cost must be included in the proposal Budget, including the determination of the value of the use of the equipment. All costs are subject to final approval by USDA.
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**REQUIREMENTS AND LIMITATIONS**

1. Q. Are RFSI projects subject to the requirements of the Build America, Buy America (BABA) provisions of the Infrastructure Investment and Jobs Act?  
A. Any public infrastructure project funded under RFSI must adhere to BABA provisions. CDFA will assist recipients with this process per AMS guidance. For such projects, the recipient must comply with the Buy America Sourcing requirements outlined in the (BABA) provisions of the [Infrastructure Investment and Jobs Act](https://www.congress.gov/bill/117th-congress/house-bill/3684/text) (<https://www.congress.gov/bill/117th-congress/house-bill/3684/text>). Note that BABA is not applicable to for-profit entities or projects where the total federal funding is below the Simplified Acquisition Threshold of \$250,000. For more information, refer to [2 CFR Part 184](https://www.ecfr.gov/current/title-2/part-184) (<https://www.ecfr.gov/current/title-2/part-184>).
2. Q. Are RFSI projects subject to the requirements of the National Environmental Policy Act (NEPA)?  
A. All activities funded under RFSI must comply with NEPA and related applicable agency regulations and instructions, Section 106 of the National Historic Preservation Act (NHPA), the Endangered Species Act (ESA), other laws and regulations as outlined therein, and any applicable state, local, or tribal laws. A review for NEPA compliance is required prior to the award of grant funds. If selected for an award, applicants must provide all requested information to support compliance with NEPA, NHPA, ESA, and all other federal environmental laws and regulations. For more information, refer to "[A Citizen's Guide to NEPA](https://ceq.doe.gov/docs/get-involved/citizens-guide-to-nepa-2021.pdf)" (<https://ceq.doe.gov/docs/get-involved/citizens-guide-to-nepa-2021.pdf>). Applicants selected for submission to USDA may be required to complete a questionnaire or otherwise provide information related to NEPA prior to submission. (*response edited February 22, 2024*)
3. Q. What are the requirements if an applicant would like to use RFSI funds to expand upon a program already funded by other grant funds?  
A. Expansion of an already-funded project is allowable with RFSI funds. It is the responsibility of the applicant to demonstrate that they have robust tracking methods in place to ensure that RFSI funds are not used for the same costs as other sources of funding; that is, applicants are required to show that their project can avoid duplication of costs.
4. Q. Does CDFA have preferred service providers for food safety training?  
A. There are three organizations that have been certified by the Food and Drug Administration (FDA) to provide trainings related to the Food Safety Modernization Act (FSMA): the Produce Safety Alliance, the Food Safety Preventative Controls Alliance, and the Sprouts Safety Alliance.

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5. Q. Can a proposed project take place on property not owned by the applicant; for example, could an organization that is leasing land or property use RFSI funds to upgrade equipment on that property?
- A. Applicants who will make upgrades to land or property that they do not own should submit a Critical Resource Infrastructure Letter with their application to demonstrate that they have the approval of the property owner to do so. A template can be found here: [https://www.cdfa.ca.gov/rfsi/docs/CriticalResourceInfrastructureTemplateLetter\\_Compliant.docx](https://www.cdfa.ca.gov/rfsi/docs/CriticalResourceInfrastructureTemplateLetter_Compliant.docx)
6. Q. Should applicants include proof of meeting SBA eligibility requirements with their application?
- A. CDFA does not anticipate requiring documentation at the time of application. Applicants are effectively self-certifying as eligible by applying. Note that USDA may require documentation before issuing final approval of CDFA's funding recommendation and documentation may be requested as part of a CDFA or USDA site visit or audit.

***New Questions: February 22, 2024***

7. Q. Is the income from RFSI grants taxable?
- A. At this time, CDFA anticipates that funds awarded by RFSI will not be considered taxable income. CDFA will update applicants if USDA issues formal guidance on this subject.
8. Q. Are RFSI funds subject to prevailing wage requirements?
- A. RFSI is not subject to prevailing wage requirements.
9. Q. Is sole-source contracting allowable under RFSI?
- A. CDFA discourages the use of sole source contracting. This method is appropriate in limited circumstances and subject to approval by CDFA and USDA. If awarded funds, changes to the procurement methodology and/or named contractor in a proposal will also require CDFA and USDA approval. Applicants must have an established procurement policy which conforms to applicable federal law and reflects applicable state, local, and tribal laws and regulations and follow that policy when procuring goods and services with federal funds. Reference [2 CFR 200.317 – 200.327](https://www.ecfr.gov/current/title-2/subtitle-A/chapter-II/part-200/subpart-D/subject-group-ECFR45ddd4419ad436d) (<https://www.ecfr.gov/current/title-2/subtitle-A/chapter-II/part-200/subpart-D/subject-group-ECFR45ddd4419ad436d>) for additional detail.

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10. Q. Are fiscal sponsorships allowable under RFSI?
- A. Proposals that involve a fiscal sponsorship are subject to the following requirements, 1) the fiscal sponsorship arrangement and the identities of the involved parties must be clearly disclosed within the proposal; 2) if awarded funds, the fiscal sponsor, rather than the sponsored organization, is the grant recipient; is responsible for executing the grant agreement; and must ensure all project activities and costs, including activities of the sponsored organization, contractors, or consultants, comply with applicable federal regulations and requirements and grant terms and conditions; 3) changes to the recipient (such as a change from the non-profit fiscal sponsor to the sponsored organization) or key personnel require USDA and CDFA approval; and 4) fiscal sponsorship fees cannot be charged as a direct cost. Fiscal sponsorship fees may be allowable as an indirect cost, if charged consistent with the sponsored organization's established policies.
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**SCORING CRITERIA**

1. Q. Can CDFA advise applicants on how to answer questions or complete the application in order to maximize a proposal's competitiveness?
- A. While CDFA is able to provide support and answer most questions, CDFA cannot advise individual applicants on how to best complete their application or how to answer specific questions, nor can CDFA speculate on how reviewers will view a particular application or question response. CDFA recommends all applicants provide as much detail, support, and documentation as is available to them at the time of application. A good rule of thumb is to ask if a reasonable reader would understand a response and find it to be justified, complete, and to fully answer the question asked.
2. Q. Can CDFA provide guidance on how particular responses may be scored by the Technical Review Committee (TRC)?
- A. RFSI is a new program. As such, there are no historical examples of which projects have been more or less successful in past application cycles. CDFA recommends all applicants refer to the scoring rubrics in the [RFP](https://www.cdfa.ca.gov/rfsi/docs/rfsi_request_for_proposals.pdf) ([https://www.cdfa.ca.gov/rfsi/docs/rfsi\\_request\\_for\\_proposals.pdf](https://www.cdfa.ca.gov/rfsi/docs/rfsi_request_for_proposals.pdf)) to understand how the TRC will score each proposal; reviewers will receive the same guidance that is included in the RFP.
3. Q. Are there any scoring penalties to organizations using a grant writer or other consultant when applying?
- A. The use of a grant writer/consultant is allowed and should be disclosed in the application. There are no scoring disadvantages to applications submitted by a grant writer or consultant, provided the benefit of the grant goes directly to the processor, farmer, etc. and the middle of the supply chain in general.

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4. Q. Could a proposal be awarded funding if it contains some ineligible or miscategorized costs?  
A. If a project could be successful without those unallowable costs and/or activities, and the proposal is otherwise well-reviewed and selected for funding, the proposal may move forward. CDFA staff will work with recipients to remove unallowable costs and/or activities or to modify costs to fit program requirements.
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**REVIEW AND NOTIFICATION**

1. Q. Who will make up the TRC?  
A. The TRC will be comprised of CDFA subject matter experts.
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**GRANT MANAGEMENT**

1. Q. Should a project be awarded funding, how often will progress reports be required?  
A. For Infrastructure Grants, progress reports will be due annually and at the close of the project. For Equipment-Only Grants, progress reports will be due at project close.
2. Q. Can grant recipients request advance payments once funds are awarded?  
A. Advance payments may be available. Typically, the maximum amount that can be advanced is based on a maximum dollar amount or a percentage (potentially up to 90 percent) of the project. Advance payments are subject to a projected need limit of 90 days. *(response edited January 26, 2024)*
3. Q. How frequently will payments be issued during the grant period, should a project be awarded funding?  
A. Reimbursements will be based on invoices submitted to CDFA. Invoices must be submitted at least quarterly, and no more frequently than monthly.
4. Q. Will there be the opportunity to extend the grant term past the end date?  
A. Currently, USDA has issued guidance that no-cost extensions will not be available for RFSI projects.
5. Q. If an applicant is unable to continue with a project, can another entity take over the project?  
A. Should an organization be unable to continue with a project for any reason, there is no guarantee that the contract could be transferred to a partner organization or other entity. CDFA encourages all successful applicants to remain in contact with their assigned Grant Analyst to help ensure successful completion of projects.

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***New Questions: February 22, 2024***

6. Q. Can grant recipients make adjustments or changes to their project or budget during the grant duration?
- A. Small, reasonable changes can usually be made during the grant duration with CDFA and, if required, USDA approval. Successful applicants will receive detailed information on this process during the execution of a Grant Agreement.
7. Q. How should applicants proceed if they are awarded funding and, in the execution of the project, they are unable to comply with RFSI terms and conditions?
- A. Grant recipients will be expected to comply with all RFSI terms and conditions. Should recipients anticipate that an issue may arise, they should communicate with their assigned Grant Analyst as soon as possible to avoid the circumstance where they are unable to comply with all RFSI terms and conditions.
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