

REQUEST FOR APPLICATIONS

National Bison Production and Marketing Grant

Funded by the USDA AMS Bison Production and Marketing Grant Program (BPMGP)

Administered by: Mad Agriculture

Funding Year: Fiscal Year (FY) 2026

RFA Release Date: June 1, 2026

Letter of Intent Deadline: June 29, 2026, 11:59 PM CST

Invitation for Full Application: July 13, 2026

Full Application Deadline: August 24, 2026, 11:59 PM CST

Award Notification Commencement Period: October 5, 2026

Total Funds Available for Subawards: \$1,120,000 (up to \$80,000 per award)

Latest Project End Date: July 31, 2028

KEY LINKS AND DOCUMENTS

Submit your Letter of Intent at:

<https://madagriculture.org/bison-program/national-bison-production-and-marketing-grant>

Additional Resources:

- **SAM.gov Registration:** <https://sam.gov/>

Full application links will be provided to invited applicants following the LOI review.

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1. Executive Summary

The U.S. Department of Agriculture (USDA) Agricultural Marketing Service (AMS) has awarded funding to Mad Agriculture (MA) as one of three Prime Grant Recipients (PGR) to administer a portion of the Bison Production and Marketing Grant Program (BPMGP). BPMGP is authorized under Division B, Title VII, Section 764 of the Consolidated Appropriations Act of 2024 (Public Law 118-42).

The purpose of the BPMGP is to support projects that strengthen and enhance the production and marketing of bison and bison products in the United States, including improvements in business and resource development and the development of innovative approaches to address long-term needs. The U.S. bison industry faces significant barriers, including limited processing and market access, insufficient coordinated technical and business support for producers, and varying levels of production capacity.

MA's portion of the BPMGP is administered as the National Bison Production and Marketing Grant (NBPMG). Through this program, MA will administer a total of \$1,120,000 in competitive subawards to support bison producers in adaptive grazing and herd management, business viability, and production infrastructure. These subawards pair targeted financial support with hands-on technical assistance to advance the production, marketing, and business and resource development goals of the BPMGP. Funds support activities including regenerative grazing systems, herd and land management, improvements to handling facilities, and business planning and enterprise development. Maximum award size is \$80,000 per subaward.

Applicants may request up to \$80,000 per award. The Award Notification Commencement Period begins October 5, 2026. The project period of performance begins upon full execution of the subaward agreement and must end by July 31, 2028. MA seeks applications that align with the program priorities outlined in this document.

This RFA covers only MA's subaward program. Two additional PGRs, [Flower Hill Institute](#) and the [National Bison Association](#), are administering separate subaward programs with different programmatic focuses. If your project is primarily focused on bison processing, product innovation, or industry-wide education and data, one of those grants may be a better fit. Information on those programs is available on their respective websites.

2. Program Overview

A. Purpose and Intent

The BPMGP is designed to address systemic barriers facing the U.S. bison industry through the production, marketing, and business and resource development of bison and bison products. MA's subaward program, the NBPMG, advances these goals by supporting producers in adaptive grazing and herd management, business viability, and production infrastructure, paired with direct technical assistance when requested. Applicants should review [Section 3](#) carefully to identify which program goals best align with their needs.

B. Grant Structure

This grant provides an open, competitive application process. Any eligible entity ([Section 4A](#)) may submit a Letter of Intent (LOI) during the published application window. This subaward competition will be conducted in an open and fair manner and in full compliance with the [Federal Acquisition Regulation](#) (FAR) and the requirements of [2 CFR Part 200](#).

Following LOI review and eligibility screening, invited applicants will submit a full application to MA. MA will administer subawards and provide technical assistance to support producers in adaptive grazing and herd management, business viability, and production infrastructure.

MA is one of three PGRs administering subawards under the BPMGP. If your project is focused on bison processing, product innovation, or industry-wide education and data tools, another PGR grant may be a better fit. Information is available on their respective websites.

C. Available Funding

MA is administering a total of \$1,120,000 to subawards, with a maximum of \$80,000 per award. Projects may last up to approximately 20 months, ending by July 31, 2028, at the latest. Award sizes are estimates. Final allocations may vary based on application quality, grant needs, and availability of federal funds. Applicants are welcome to propose projects with budgets below the maximum award amount.

D. Key Dates and Deadlines

RFA Release Date:	June 1, 2026
Letter of Intent Deadline:	June 29, 2026, 11:59 PM CST
Invitation for Full Application:	July 13, 2026
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Award Notification Commencement Period:	October 5, 2026

Project start dates will be subject to subaward contracting and execution.

Late applications will not be accepted under any circumstances.

3. Mad Agriculture Grant

This section describes MA's programmatic focus, funding priorities, and applicant profile best suited for this grant. Applicants should review this section carefully before submitting an LOI.

A. Background

MA is a Boulder, Colorado-based 501(c)(3) nonprofit with a mission to create a regenerative revolution in agriculture. Founded in 2018, MA works directly with farmers and ranchers across the United States to strengthen production systems, business viability, and market access through integrated technical assistance, financial tools, and market development support.

MA has extensive experience delivering on-the-ground technical assistance to producers at all stages of the regenerative transition, with particular expertise in adaptive grazing, herd management, farm business planning, and enterprise analysis. In this grant, MA administers subawards that pair direct financial support with hands-on technical assistance to help bison producers improve operations, strengthen business models, and adopt regenerative production practices.

B. Purpose and Focus

MA subawards pair financial and technical assistance to help bison producers strengthen their operations, improve grazing and herd management, build business viability, and invest in production infrastructure. All MA awardees will receive up to three one-hour technical assistance sessions with the MA team as part of their award at no additional cost. These sessions are designed to support project implementation, troubleshooting, and connection to additional resources, and are available to all awardees regardless of project type.

Applicants who anticipate needing technical assistance beyond these three included sessions should describe the scope and associated costs in their project narrative and budget. MA can help connect awardees to qualified contractors and service providers where additional support is needed.

All awardees will be required to contribute to shared learning outcomes and provide reporting on project implementation. Awardees may also be asked to participate in peer learning opportunities, workshops, or webinars to share results and best practices.

MA subawards are designed for working bison producers focused on on-ranch production, grazing management, and business viability. If your project primarily focuses on processed product development, value-added market access, or processing infrastructure, another PGR grant may be a better fit. Information on other PGR grants is available on their respective websites.

C. Funding Priorities and Potential Project Activities

MA's grant is organized around two goals. Applicants should identify the goal or goals most relevant to their proposed project. A project may address more than one goal.

Goal 1: Regenerative Bison Management and Production Systems Improvements

This goal supports producers in implementing adaptive grazing systems, improving herd management, adopting regenerative and ecologically sound production practices, and investing in the physical infrastructure and equipment needed to support long-term operational growth and herd health. Technical assistance from MA or qualified external providers may be proposed. New buildings or permanent enclosed structures of any kind are not eligible under this goal or any other goal in this grant.

Examples of Eligible Activities:

The activities listed below are anticipated to be eligible without requiring a NEPA environmental review; however, MA makes no guarantees regarding regulatory determinations. Applicants are responsible for assessing applicable federal, state, and local environmental review requirements for their proposed projects, and all full application invitees are required to submit the USDA AMS Environmental Questionnaire with their full application when proposing projects involving any physical activities (as outlined in this section). MA will review each questionnaire, work with the awardee to document why their activities qualify for a Categorical Exclusion, and submit that recommendation to AMS for final determination. In some cases, AMS may require an ENV-A or ENV-B review ([See Section 4F](#)), even for activities listed below. MA will be available to support awardees through that process as needed.

Grazing, Land, and Herd Management:

- Conduct on-site assessments of grazing systems, forage conditions, and herd health
- Develop adaptive grazing and herd management plans tailored to producer goals and ecological context
- Implement region-specific adaptations to grazing, landscape management, and cultural context
- Integrate Indigenous and place-based knowledge into production approaches where appropriate
- Track ecological and production outcomes to inform ongoing adaptive management
- Pasture seeding, interseeding, and cover crop establishment using regionally appropriate species (planting of invasive, noxious, or non-native weed species is not permitted)
- Manual brush and woody vegetation removal using hand tools to improve forage access and grazing conditions
- Manual weed and invasive species management to improve pasture health and forage quality

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Handling Facilities and Equipment:

- Purchase and installation of portable or semi-permanent handling equipment, including squeeze chutes, corral panels, loading chutes, and alleyway systems
- Installation of above-ground concrete pads on previously disturbed surfaces where no ground excavation is required
- Purchase of herd management equipment, including scales, electronic identification systems, and veterinary supply equipment
- Purchase of production-related technology, software, or monitoring systems, including GPS ear tags and livestock tracking technology
- Repair, maintenance, or minor modification of existing farm-related structures and facilities

Fencing and Water (no ground disturbance):

- Repair, maintenance, or removal of existing fencing
- Existing fence replacement in kind
- Installation of portable or stationary water storage tanks, troughs, and above-ground water distribution equipment not requiring ground excavation
- Spring development on previously disturbed land

The following activities (marked * below) are eligible, yet subject to federal environmental review under NEPA. Applicants proposing these activities will be required to complete the USDA AMS Applicant Environmental Questionnaire, which will be provided as part of your full application invitation packet. Work on these activities cannot begin until the USDA has approved the required documentation or Categorical Exclusion. NEPA review does not need to be finalized before a subaward is made; however, you cannot begin any work until the NEPA process is complete. No subaward may perform any work before or during NEPA review. To note, please be aware that NEPA review can significantly alter project timelines, and when possible, to propose projects focused on CATEX activities. See [Section 4F](#) for the full process. The complete USDA Categorical Exclusion list is available at [7 CFR §1b.4](#).

- * Installation of new permanent fencing on new alignments
- * Installation of water pipelines requiring ground disturbance
- * Drilling or development of new water wells
- * Ponds, dugouts, and permanent water impoundments requiring excavation
- * Spring development on previously undisturbed land
- * Watering tank or trough installation in areas not previously disturbed
- * Prescribed burning, including any associated firebreak preparation
- * Mechanical brush and woody vegetation removal using heavy equipment
- * Livestock crossing facilities requiring ground disturbance
- * Installation of concrete pads to support handling facilities or equipment where ground excavation is required

Goal 2: Business Support and Financial Sustainability

This goal supports producers in building viable, resilient business models, improving the long-term financial sustainability of their bison operation, and strengthening the systems and connections that support day-to-day production. Activities under this goal are advisory in nature and do not trigger NEPA environmental review requirements.

Examples of Eligible Activities:

- Conduct enterprise analyses and financial assessments for bison operations
- Develop or refine business plans and market strategies
- Access tools and guidance for cost tracking, pricing, and profitability analysis
- Identify opportunities for diversification and value-added revenue streams
- Improve market positioning and access to new or existing markets
- Access troubleshooting and adaptive management guidance throughout the project period
- Connect to additional resources, technical service providers, and peer networks
- Operational systems improvements, such as recordkeeping, scheduling, and workflow planning, to increase efficiency and support long-term herd growth
- Documentation and evaluation of production and business outcomes to support planning and future decision-making

D. Ideal Applicant Profile

The ideal applicant for an MA subaward is a bison producer or producer group seeking financial support and technical assistance to improve, expand, or transition their operation.

Strong applicants will demonstrate:

- Active engagement in bison production at any stage (beginning, intermediate, or advanced)
- A clear, specific project scope tied to one or more of the two grant goals
- A commitment to ecologically sound, adaptive, or regenerative management approaches, where applicable to their operation
- Willingness to engage in technical assistance, progress reporting, and peer knowledge-sharing activities
- Readiness to implement proposed activities within the project period
- For projects proposing asterisked (*) activities: a project narrative that explains why the physical investment is central to the project goals and how the work plan accounts for the NEPA review timeline

E. Examples of Eligible Projects

The following project descriptions illustrate the range of work this grant is designed to support. They are examples only. Applicants are encouraged to propose projects based on their own operation's needs and goals that are shown to be within the scope, purpose, and eligible

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activities of this RFA. Projects that do not resemble these examples may still be highly competitive.

- A bison producer in the Northern Plains uses a \$65,000 award to install a portable handling system, including chutes, corral panels, and scales, and to equip their herd with GPS ear tags to enable systematic health monitoring and more efficient operations. The remaining budget funds a grazing plan assessment and a first enterprise analysis to evaluate direct market options. No asterisked activities are proposed. The application clearly describes the handling system components, explains how GPS data will improve herd management decisions, and includes a realistic timeline for installation and implementation.
- A tribal ranching operation in the Southwest uses an \$80,000 award to install new permanent cross-fencing to support a rotational grazing system. The application includes the completed USDA AMS Environmental Questionnaire from the invitation packet, along with a project narrative explaining why the fencing investment is central to the operation's long-term grazing management goals and how the work plan accounts for the NEPA review timeline. The remaining budget funds an adaptive grazing plan, developed in partnership with MA or a preferred technical assistance provider to support the plan's integration and implementation.
- A beginning bison producer uses a \$45,000 award entirely for business support: an enterprise analysis, a business plan focused on direct-to-consumer and wholesale market development, financial modeling tools, and a market access strategy. No physical activities are proposed. The application clearly describes the producer's current operations, identifies specific business challenges the project will address, and includes measurable outcomes, such as a completed business plan, a cost-per-pound analysis, and new buyer relationships established during the project period.

F. Award Information

- **Award Range:** Up to \$80,000 per award
- **Project Duration:** Approximately 20 months (must finish by July 31, 2028)
- **Required Participation:** Shared learning outcomes, performance and financial reporting, and potential peer learning webinars

4. Eligibility

A. Eligible Entities

Eligible applicants include the following entity types:

- **Agricultural Businesses or Cooperatives:** Businesses or member-owned entities that provide, hold, deliver, transport, offer, or sell agricultural products or services for member benefit, as well as organizations or other businesses that they represent.
- **Economic Development Corporations:** Organizations whose missions are to improve, maintain, develop, and/or market or promote a specific geographic area.

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- **Local Governments:** Any unit of government within a State, including a county, borough, municipality, city, town, township, parish, local public authority, special district, school district, intrastate district, council of governments, and any other agency or instrumentality of a multi-state, regional, or intra-state or local government.
- **Nonprofit Corporations:** Any organization or institution, including nonprofits with State or IRS 501(c) status and accredited institutions of higher education, where no part of the organization's net earnings is to the benefit of any private shareholder or individual.
- **Producer Networks or Associations:** Producer group or member-owned organizations or businesses that provide, offer, or sell agricultural products or services through a common distribution system for the mutual member benefit, as well as organizations or other businesses that assist, represent, or serve producers or producer networks.
- **Federally Chartered Tribal Organizations:** Tribal corporations chartered under Section 17 of the Indian Reorganization Act of 1934 (25 U.S.C. § 5124).
- **Tribal Governments:** Governing bodies or governmental agencies of any Indian Tribe, band, nation, or other organized group or community certified by the Secretary of the Interior as eligible for the special programs and services provided through the Bureau of Indian Affairs.

B. Ineligible Applicants

Any entity type not listed in [Section 4A](#) is ineligible to apply. Additionally, the following are ineligible regardless of entity type:

- Individuals applying in a personal capacity (not on behalf of a registered legal entity)
- Entities without a valid UEI number at the time of LOI submission, or without an active SAM.gov registration at the time of full application invitation (see [Section 6D](#) for registration requirements and timing)
- For-profit entities are eligible to apply if they are primarily engaged in bison production, processing, or marketing. For-profit entities that do not have a direct connection to bison production, research, or marketing are ineligible.

C. Geographic Eligibility

All applicants must be based in the 50 States, American Samoa, the District of Columbia, Guam, the Federated States of Micronesia, the Commonwealth of the Northern Mariana Islands, the Commonwealth of Puerto Rico, or the U.S. Virgin Islands.

D. Priority Applicant Characteristics

Priority will be given to applicants who:

- Are actively engaged in bison production or directly supporting bison producers
- Demonstrate readiness to implement proposed activities within the project timeline
- Align with the grant goals of production growth and market participation

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- For projects proposing asterisked (*) activities in [Section 3C](#): demonstrate in the project narrative that the physical investment is essential to project goals, and the NEPA review timeline is accounted for in the work plan

E. Ineligible Activities

The following activities are not eligible for funding under this grant, regardless of project type:

- Land acquisition or real estate purchases
- Debt repayment or refinancing
- Lobbying or political activities
- General operating expenses not directly attributable to the proposed project activities
- Purchase of general-purpose vehicles, including trucks, pickup trucks, ATVs, and utility vehicles, regardless of claimed agricultural purpose
- Projects that do not demonstrate a direct connection to bison production, processing, or market development
- New buildings or permanent enclosed structures of any kind
- Legal fees or other costs associated with establishing a business or organization
- Projects that depend on the completion of a separate project or the receipt of another grant to be viable
- Pure research projects without a direct, demonstrable benefit to bison producer operations or the broader bison industry

Certain physical activities are eligible but subject to federal environmental review under NEPA before work may begin. These activities are identified with an asterisk (*) in [Section 3C](#). See [Section 4F](#) for the complete review process.

F. NEPA Environmental Review Process

This section applies to all full application invitees who propose eligible activities likely to trigger environmental review (e.g., ground disturbance – see [Section 3C](#)). If your proposed project includes only technical assistance, business consulting, monitoring, data collection, or market development, this section does not apply to you, and no environmental review is required. The forms mentioned in this section (USDA AMS Applicant Environmental Questionnaire, ENV-A and ENV-B) will be provided to applicants by MA.

What is NEPA, and why does it apply?

The National Environmental Policy Act (NEPA) requires that federal agencies assess the environmental effects of federally funded activities before those activities may proceed. Because USDA AMS funds this grant, certain physical activities funded through subawards are subject to this requirement. USDA has adopted a list of Categorical Exclusions (CATEXes) under [7 CFR §1b.4](#) that exempt certain activities from a full environmental assessment. Even

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for activities on the CATEX list, a review and recommendation must be submitted to AMS before work can begin. AMS has dedicated staff to review NEPA documentation.

What happens at the application stage?

Applicants proposing activities involving ground disturbance, vegetation removal, construction, or impacts to surface water ([7 CFR §1b.4](#)) will be required to complete the USDA AMS Applicant Environmental Questionnaire as part of their full application invitation packet. This form will be provided directly by MA. The questionnaire is a brief yes/no checklist covering ground disturbance, surface water, historic properties, and related factors. Applicants do not need to determine whether their activities require a full NEPA review. MA will make that assessment and coordinate with AMS on the applicant's behalf. NEPA review does not need to be finalized before a subaward is made.

What happens after award notification?

Step 1: MA prepares the AMS Environmental Pre-Screening Worksheet (ENV-A) using the information provided in the applicant's completed questionnaire. If ENV-A confirms no extraordinary environmental circumstances, MA submits its NEPA recommendation to AMS.

Step 2: If ENV-A identifies potential concerns or extraordinary circumstances, MA completes the Environmental Screening Worksheet (ENV-B). This may involve coordination with the State Historic Preservation Officer (SHPO), the Tribal Historic Preservation Officer (THPO), the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service, or the National Marine Fisheries Service. AMS serves as the Responsible Federal Official and issues the final determination.

Step 3: AMS issues its determination. MA notifies the awardee. Work on activities subject to environmental review may begin only if a determination results in a Finding of No Significant Impact (FONSI). Award notification alone does not authorize work on these activities.

What does this mean for your project timeline?

For most applicants, ENV-A pre-screening is straightforward and resolves quickly after award notification. Projects that trigger an ENV-B review, including SHPO, THPO, or agency coordination, will require additional time before work can begin. Applicants should account for this in their work plan. MA will coordinate the review process with USDA on behalf of all awardees and will communicate determinations as soon as they are received. Applicants proposing activities subject to environmental review should clearly account for this timeline in their project narrative and work plan. No work may begin, and no funds may be disbursed until required reviews have been completed and until AMS has issued a final determination.

5. Application Checklist

Before You Apply: Application Checklist

Before submitting your Letter of Intent, confirm the following:

- My organization has a valid UEI number and has submitted its organization via <https://sam.gov> (Note: full SAM.gov activation is not required at LOI submission, but must be confirmed active before you will be invited to submit a full application)
- My organization is an eligible entity type as defined in [Section 4A](#)
- My proposed project is connected to bison production or market development
- My proposed project does not include any ineligible activities listed in [Section 4E](#)
- I have reviewed MA's funding priorities and confirmed my project aligns with at least one goal
- I understand the LOI deadline is June 29, 2026, 11:59 PM CST and late submissions will not be accepted

Before submitting your Full Application (if invited):

- I have prepared a Project Narrative addressing all required elements in [Section 6C.iii](#)
- I have prepared a line-item budget and budget narrative
- My budget items are reasonable, allowable, and tied to project activities
- I have identified key personnel and their roles
- I have obtained any letters of support I plan to include (*optional*)
- If my project includes any asterisked (*) activities or any other activities involving ground disturbance, vegetation removal, construction, or impacts to surface water, I understand I will be required to complete the USDA AMS Applicant Environmental Questionnaire as part of my full application invitation packet.
- I have verified my SAM.gov registration is still active and will be throughout the entirety of the period of performance of the project

6. Application Process and Requirements

A. Two-Step Application Overview

This is an open, public grant. Any eligible entity may submit a Letter of Intent during the published application window. The process uses two steps to reduce the burden on applicants and to ensure that full applications are requested only from eligible and competitive candidates.

Step 1: Letter of Intent (LOI):

All prospective applicants must submit a Letter of Intent by June 29, 2026, 11:59 PM CST. Applicants must have a valid UEI number at the time of LOI submission. Full SAM.gov activation is not required at this stage. LOIs will be reviewed for eligibility and basic alignment

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with grant goals only. This is a screening stage, not a competitive scoring process. LOIs will not be scored or ranked. Submitting an LOI does not guarantee an invitation to submit a full application. There is no appeal process for LOI non-selections. Applicants who are not advanced will be notified in writing with a brief statement of the reason for non-advancement.

Before issuing full application invitations, MA will verify active SAM.gov registration status for all eligible LOI applicants with USDA AMS.

Step 2: Full Application (by invitation only):

Applicants whose LOIs pass the eligibility screen will be invited to submit a full application by the application deadline (August 24, 2026, 11:59 PM CST). The Award Notification Commencement Period begins for MA's awardees on October 5, 2026. Applicants whose SAM.gov registration is not confirmed active at the close of the LOI window will not be invited to submit a full application.

B. Step 1: Letter of Intent

i. Deadline

Letters of Intent must be submitted by June 29, 2026, 11:59 PM CST. Late LOIs will not be accepted.

ii. Submission

LOI submission links for MA applicants will be publicly available beginning June 1, 2026. The link is listed on the cover page of this RFA and at the following website: [National Bison Production and Marketing Grant](#). Applicants should submit their LOI through the link provided on the website.

iii. Required Contents

The Letter of Intent must include:

- Applicant and organization information
- Organization type
- UEI and SAM.gov status
- Brief project overview
- Expected outcomes
- Estimated budget and timeline

C. Step 2: Full Application

i. Deadline

Full applications must be submitted by MA's deadline of August 24, 2026, 11:59 PM CST. Late applications will not be accepted.

ii. Submission

Full application links will be provided directly to invited applicants via email following LOI review.

iii. Project Narrative (3 to 5 pages, minimum 11pt font)

The project narrative is the foundation of your application. It should give reviewers a clear and specific understanding of your project: what you will do, why it matters, who will do the work, and how you will measure success. Strong narratives are grounded in the specific context of the proposed project and make a direct connection between the problem being addressed and the activities proposed to address it.

Your narrative must address all six sections below. Reviewers will evaluate applications against the criteria in [Section 7B](#), and this structure maps directly to those criteria. Sections do not need to be labeled as such, but all required content must be present.

1. About Your Organization or Operation

Describe your organization or operation, including your mission or purpose, your history and scale of work relevant to this application, and your current engagement with bison production, processing, market development, or industry education. This section establishes your organizational context for reviewers and should be concise. Two to three paragraphs are sufficient for most applicants.

2. The Problem or Opportunity

Describe the specific challenge or opportunity your project addresses. Strong applications identify a concrete, bounded problem rather than a general industry need. Explain why this problem matters to your organization or to the producers, businesses, or communities you serve, and what will change if the project succeeds. Where relevant, provide data or specific context that illustrates the scale or significance of the issue.

3. Proposed Activities and Work Plan

Describe what you will do and how. This section must include:

- A description of proposed activities and how they connect to the funding priorities of MA, as described in Section 3 of this RFA
- A work plan identifying: (1) planned activities and timeline; (2) how and where activities will take place; (3) resources required; and (4) the person or persons responsible for each activity, including any contractors or service providers
- If your project includes technical assistance or training, describe participant recruitment strategies, the subject matter to be covered, and the methods by which it will be delivered

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Applicants seeking technical assistance beyond the three one-hour sessions included with all awards should describe the scope of additional assistance needed, including subject matter and delivery method, and include associated costs in the budget.

Applicants proposing activities marked with an asterisk (*) in [Section 3C](#) must also:*

- Explain why each asterisked activity is essential to the project and cannot reasonably be substituted with a non-asterisked alternative
- Describe how the NEPA review timeline has been incorporated into the work plan, including which activities can proceed before a USDA determination is received and which cannot begin until USDA approves the required documentation

4. *Expected Outcomes*

Describe the outcomes you expect from this project. You must include at least one measurable, quantifiable indicator of success. Outcomes should be realistic and trackable within the project period. For each outcome, describe how you will measure it and what data or documentation you will use to track progress.

Examples of measurable outcomes across grant areas include:

Goal 1: Regenerative Bison Management and Production Systems

- Number of animals handled per season through new or improved handling facilities
- Acres under an implemented adaptive grazing plan
- Linear feet of fencing installed or repaired
- Number of water infrastructure improvements completed (tanks, troughs, pipelines)
- Number of pasture or paddock subdivisions created to support rotational grazing
- Acres of pasture seeded, interseeded, or treated for invasive species management

Goal 2: Business Support and Financial Sustainability

- Completion of an enterprise analysis with a defined scope and documented findings
- Completion of a business plan with specific market access or financial targets identified
- Number of new buyers or market relationships established during the project period
- Cost-per-pound analysis completed and documented
- Number of operational systems improvements implemented and described

Applicable to Both Goals

- Number of technical assistance sessions completed with MA or external providers
- Participation in at least one peer learning opportunity, workshop, or webinar during the project period

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5. Key Personnel and Partners

Identify the key personnel involved in the project, their roles, and their relevant experience. If you plan to work with contractors, technical service providers, or partner organizations, describe who they are and what they will contribute. If specific providers have not yet been identified, describe the qualifications you will require and how you will select them.

6. Budget Summary

Provide a brief written overview of your proposed budget, including the total amount requested and how funds will be allocated across the major cost categories. The full budget details are provided in the budget spreadsheet and the narrative required under [Section 6C.iv](#). This summary should give reviewers a clear picture of overall resource allocation before they review the budget in full.

iv. Budget and Budget Narrative

All full applications must include a completed budget spreadsheet and a written budget narrative. Both are required. An application that includes a spreadsheet without a narrative, or a narrative without a supporting spreadsheet, is incomplete.

Budget Spreadsheet

If applicants are selected for the full application, MA will provide a Subaward Budget Template for use by awardees. The template includes an Instructions tab with guidance for each line-item category. If the applicant prefers to use their own worksheet, the same information must be in the submitted budget. Any category omitted will result in a null application. If any cost centers listed below are not part of the project, put \$0.

The template is organized around the following cost categories, consistent with the federal cost definitions in [2 CFR §200](#).

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Line Item	What belongs here
Personnel	Salaries and wages for staff working on this project, in proportion to the time devoted to it. For each person, identify their name or role, compensation rate, and the percentage of time or number of hours dedicated to project activities.
Fringe Benefits	Employer-paid benefits associated with personnel listed above, including payroll taxes, health insurance, and retirement contributions. Typically expressed as a percentage of wages. Enter \$0 if your organization does not pay formal fringe benefits.
Travel	Project-related travel, including mileage, lodging, and per diem. Costs must be tied to specific project activities. General commuting and personal travel are not allowable.
Equipment	Items with a useful life of more than 1 year and a cost per unit of \$10,000 or more. Enter each item as a separate row with unit cost and quantity. Equipment costs are excluded from the indirect cost base. General-purpose vehicles, including trucks, pickup trucks, ATVs, and utility vehicles, may not be purchased regardless of proposed use.
Supplies	Items with a per-unit cost under \$10,000, including consumable materials. Enter each item as a separate row with unit cost and quantity. Supply costs are included in the indirect cost base. Examples include ear tags, pasture seed, fence-repair materials, veterinary supplies, and portable handling components priced under \$10,000 per unit.
Contracts and Consulting Services	Payments to contractors, consultants, or technical service providers performing work on your project. Examples include grazing consultants, business planning advisors, marketing professionals, veterinarians, and data or technology developers. Contractor rates may not exceed the equivalent of a GS-15 Step 10 federal employee salary for the applicable area. Describe the scope of work and basis for the rate in your budget narrative.
Other	Allowable project costs not captured in other categories, such as printing, postage, or project-specific software subscriptions. General organizational operating expenses not directly tied to project activities are not allowable.
Indirect Costs	See guidance below.

Indirect Costs

Indirect costs are overhead costs that benefit the project but cannot be directly assigned to it, such as a proportionate share of office space, utilities, or organizational accounting functions.

The budget template automatically calculates indirect costs at the de minimis rate of 15% of Modified Total Direct Costs (MTDC). MTDC includes Personnel, Fringe Benefits, Travel, Supplies, Contracts and Consulting Services, and Other, but excludes Equipment items with

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per-unit costs of \$10,000 or more. This calculation is built into the template and updates automatically as line items are completed.

If your organization has a current federally negotiated indirect cost rate agreement (NICRA), you may charge indirect costs at your negotiated rate in place of the de minimis rate. Replace the pre-filled formula in the indirect costs line with your negotiated rate applied to MTDC, and attach a copy of your current NICRA to your application.

If your organization elects not to charge indirect costs, enter zero in the indirect costs line.

Budget Narrative

The budget narrative is a written explanation submitted alongside the budget spreadsheet. It must describe, for each line item with a non-zero amount, how the dollar amount was calculated, how it will be used, and why it is necessary for the proposed project. Refer to the table in the Budget Spreadsheet section above for guidance on what to address for each cost category.

Program Income

If your project is expected to generate revenue during the project period (e.g., from bison sales enabled by grant-funded infrastructure improvements, or from registration fees collected at a grant-supported training event), you must disclose this in the program income section of the budget template and in your budget narrative. Program income exceeding \$25,000 during the project period must be reported to MA as specified in your subaward agreement. All program income must be used to further the project's objectives.

v. Optional Letters of Support

Letters of support are not required but may strengthen an application. Examples of organizations that could provide letters of support include:

- Universities or extension services
- Industry partners or cooperatives
- Tribal organizations
- Technical service providers
- State agencies or conservation organizations

D. SAM.gov Registration Requirement

All applicants must have a valid Unique Entity Identifier (UEI) at the time of LOI submission. Full SAM.gov activation is not required at the LOI stage, but must be confirmed active before receiving a full application invitation. Applicants whose SAM.gov registration is not confirmed active at the time of LOI eligibility determination will not be advanced to the full application stage, regardless of LOI quality.

Understanding the two-stage SAM.gov process:

There are two distinct steps applicants should understand:

Step 1: Obtaining your UEI: A UEI is a unique identifier assigned to your organization upon initial registration at www.sam.gov. This can typically be completed relatively quickly and does not require full federal vetting. Your UEI is what you will submit with your LOI.

Step 2: Full SAM.gov Activation: After obtaining your UEI, your registration must undergo a full federal activation process in which USDA validates your entity, verifies your IRS information, and confirms that your organization is eligible to receive federal awards. This is a separate process from obtaining your UEI and can take four weeks or more. Full activation must be complete before you can receive a full application invitation or a federal award.

Important: Your legal business name on SAM.gov must exactly match your IRS records, including punctuation (for example, "LLC" vs. "L.L.C."). Mismatches are a common reason for delayed or rejected registrations.

SAM.gov accounts must be renewed annually. Your organization must maintain an active SAM.gov registration throughout the full application review period and, if awarded, during the entire project period of performance. Applications from entities whose SAM.gov registrations lapse after the invitation is issued will not be considered.

SAM.gov registration can be completed or renewed at www.sam.gov.

Required Action	Timing to Obtain/Submit
Obtaining your organization's UEI Number (if you do not already have one)	7-10 business days
Establishing an active SAM.gov account (if you do not already have one)	7-10 business days
Obtaining a TIN/EIN (if you do not already have one)	Up to 2 weeks
Total estimated time for new registrations	Up to 4 weeks or longer

7. Review and Selection

A. Review Process

MA and an independent expert review panel will review full applications. Applications that pass the initial review or LOI screening are evaluated on their overall merit by a panel of independent peer reviewers. MA attempts to match reviewers with applications in their areas of expertise. Each reviewer signs a Conflict of Interest (COI) and confidentiality agreement for any assigned

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applications. Peer review panels evaluate assigned applications using instructions prepared by MA. Individual reviewers score applications and discuss with panel members to arrive at a consensus score. MA then uses the scores as the basis for selecting applications for administrative review. Each application that meets the initial LOI screening requirements will be reviewed and scored competitively using the criteria listed below. Applications will be graded on the following criteria: Alignment and Intent, Technical Merit, Achievability, Expertise and Partners, and Fiscal Plan and Resources.

After the independent review panel has reviewed and scored all full applications, MA will conduct a final administrative evaluation of each review panel's top-scoring applications. In addition to the scores, MA reviews each application to ensure that projects align with the scope of this RFA, program priorities, allowability of budget items, available funding, and geographic coverage and variety. MA will work with top-scoring applicants to negotiate any necessary revisions.

B. Evaluation Criteria

Applications will be evaluated on the following criteria:

- Alignment and Intent: how clearly the project fits MA's grant goals and addresses a specific, bounded bison-industry need
- Technical Merit: soundness and feasibility of the technical approach, work plan, and timeline, including NEPA planning where applicable
- Achievability: whether the proposed scope is realistic within the proposed project timeline and supported by measurable indicators of success
- Expertise and Partners: qualifications of key personnel and partners, and capacity to meet federal subaward compliance and reporting requirements
- Fiscal Plan and Resources: whether the budget is complete, allowable under [2 CFR §200](#), and well-justified against project activities

For projects proposing asterisked () activities: clarity of the NEPA timeline plan and evidence that the review period has been accounted for in the work plan*

C. Notification of Non-Selection

Applicants who are not invited to submit a full application following LOI review will be notified in writing by MA. Applicants whose full applications are not selected for funding will also be notified in writing. Non-selection notifications for full-application invitees will be issued during the Award Notification Commencement Period.

D. Late Application Policy

Late Letters of Intent and late full applications will not be accepted under any circumstances.

8. Award Administration

A. Award Notices

Selected applicants will receive written notification from MA starting on October 5, 2026. Award notifications are not binding commitments. Awards are contingent upon execution of a subaward agreement with MA.

For awardees proposing activities subject to federal environmental review, award notification does not constitute authorization to begin those activities. Even for activities that may qualify as Categorical Exclusions, AMS must issue a final determination before work can begin. In cases where AMS determines that ENV-A or ENV-B review is required, the administering partner organization will notify the awardee and coordinate the process with USDA before any work proceeds.

B. Subaward Agreement Requirements

All awardees must:

- Execute a subaward agreement with MA
- Participate in technical assistance and/or grant coordination as required by MA
- Maintain an active SAM.gov registration throughout the period of performance
- Provide periodic progress updates as required by the subaward agreement

Specific participation, reporting, and compliance requirements will be detailed in each subaward agreement executed between the awardee and MA.

C. Reporting Requirements

Reporting requirements vary by partner organization but will be specified in each subaward agreement. Requirements may include:

- A minimum of two progress reports during the project period, each including both a performance (progress) report and a financial report, aligned with the federal fiscal year reporting cycle
 - Reporting cadence and format to be outlined in each subaward agreement
- Participation in peer learning opportunities, workshops, or webinars
- Contribution to case studies or industry resources
- A final performance report and final financial report upon project completion

MA awardees will be required to contribute to shared learning outcomes as a condition of their subaward agreement.

D. Appeal Process

The appeal process applies only to full applications that have been reviewed and not selected for funding. LOI non-selections are not subject to appeal.

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Initial Appeal:

Applicants must submit a written request for review to MA's main contact via email in .pdf format only. The request must detail the basis for disagreement and include any supporting documentation. The request must be submitted no later than 14 calendar days after the declination notice. This deadline will be strictly enforced, and no extensions will be granted.

MA will review the appeal and communicate the decision within 14 business days of receiving the appeal package. MA's decision will serve as the final determination in the appeal process.

Appeal Documentation & Formatting:

The letter of appeal must:

1. Include a copy of the adverse determination
2. Identify the issue(s) in dispute
3. Contain a full statement of the applicant's position with respect to their issue(s), including pertinent facts, supporting reasoning, and documentation to support their claim
4. No new application information that would not have been available at the time of submission will be considered

E. MA Contacts

For questions about this RFA, contact the MA at the following information:

MA Website: www.madagriculture.org

Organization email: rayle@madagriculture.org

Contact person: Rayle Heinzig | Land & Business Project Manager

9. Additional Requirements and Notices

A. Acknowledgment of USDA Support

All awardees must acknowledge USDA AMS funding in any publications, press releases, websites, social media, or public communications related to their funded project. The following language must be included:

"This project was supported by the U.S. Department of Agriculture, Agricultural Marketing Service, under Agreement No. USDA-AMS-TM-BPMGP-G-25-0001. Its contents are solely the responsibility of the authors and do not necessarily represent the official views of the USDA."

This requirement is established in law: as required in [2 CFR § 415.2](#) and as further explained in section 1.14 of the [USDA General Terms and Conditions for Federal Awards](#), Grant recipients and subrecipients must have an acknowledgment of USDA AMS support placed on any information dissemination products and must request permission before using any USDA or USDA AMS logos or marks. For additional information on acknowledgment of USDA support, please refer to section 1.14 of the [USDA General Terms and Conditions](#).

B. Non-Discrimination Statement

MA complies with all applicable Federal anti-discrimination laws for the duration of the Federal award as described in section 12.2 of the [USDA General Terms and Conditions for Federal Awards](#).

C. Freedom of Information Act

All applications submitted under this grant may be subject to requests made under the [Freedom of Information Act \(FOIA\), 5 U.S.C. § 552](#). Applicants should be aware that information contained in their application may be disclosed in response to a FOIA request. If an applicant believes any information in their application is exempt from disclosure under FOIA, they should clearly mark that information as confidential and provide a written justification for the exemption at the time of submission. Additional provisions on public access to records of funded projects are described in section 1.13 of the [USDA General Terms and Conditions](#) and the [AMS General Terms and Conditions](#).

D. Conflict(s) of Interest

Recipients and subrecipients must comply with applicable federal conflict of interest requirements, including but not limited to [2 CFR § 200.112](#), [2 CFR § 200.318](#), [2 CFR § 400.2](#), AMS' Conflict of Interest Policy, and section 1.7 of the [USDA General Terms and Conditions for Federal Awards](#).

10. Appendix

A. Federal Compliance Reference Links

The following resources are provided for reference. The administering partner organization will provide direct links to NEPA forms in the full application invitation for applicants proposing asterisked (*) activities.

Federal Regulatory References

- 7 CFR §1b.4 – USDA Categorical Exclusions list:
[ecfr.gov/current/title-7/subtitle-A/part-1b/section-1b.4](https://www.ecfr.gov/current/title-7/subtitle-A/part-1b/section-1b.4)
- 2 CFR §180 – OMB Guidelines to Agencies on Government-Wide Debarment and Suspension (Nonprocurement):
<https://www.ecfr.gov/current/title-2/subtitle-A/chapter-I/part-180?toc=1>
- 2 CFR §200 – Uniform Administrative Requirements, Cost Principles, and Audit Requirements: [ecfr.gov/current/title-2/subtitle-A/chapter-II/part-200](https://www.ecfr.gov/current/title-2/subtitle-A/chapter-II/part-200)
- [AMS General Terms & Conditions 2026](#)
- [USDA General Terms and Conditions for Federal Awards](#)
- [Freedom of Information Act \(FOIA\), 5 U.S.C. § 552](#)
- SAM.gov registration and renewal: <https://sam.gov>