



# **Meat Processing Train & Retain Grant**

## **Fiscal Years 2024 and 2025 Request for Proposals**

### **(Round 2)**

**Applications due by 4 p.m. on April 28, 2025**

In accordance with the Americans with Disabilities Act, this information is available in alternative forms of communication upon request by calling 651-201-6000. TTY users can call the Minnesota Relay Service at 711. The MDA is an equal opportunity employer and provider.

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# Grant Summary

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## Overview

The Minnesota Department of Agriculture (MDA) is now accepting applications for the Meat Processing Train & Retain Grant. This grant provides funding for partner organizations to assist small- to medium-sized meat and poultry processors with hiring and training new employees.

## Funding availability

In 2023, the Minnesota State Legislature appropriated a total of \$544,000 between FY 2024 and FY 2025 in one-time funding for this grant program (Laws of Minnesota 2023, Chapter 43, Article 1, Section 5. Subd. 2 and Section 2, Subd. 5(z)). Approximately \$350,000 in remaining funds will be available for this application cycle. Projects must be completed by June 30, 2026. Funds will be awarded to partner organizations that will work with small- to medium-sized meat and poultry processors. We expect one to three grants will be awarded, but the final number depends on the size of awards.

The minimum award is \$10,000 and the maximum award is \$250,000. Any single processor may not receive more than \$50,000 from this grant. Any individual employee may not receive more than \$10,000 through this program.

This request for proposals (RFP) does not obligate the State of Minnesota to award any grant contract agreements.

## Priorities

It is the policy of the State of Minnesota to ensure fairness, precision, equity, and consistency in competitive grant awards. This includes implementing diversity and inclusion in grant-making.

[Policy 08-02: Rating Criteria for Competitive Grant Review \(PDF\)](#) sets up the expectation that grant programs intentionally show how the grant serves diverse populations, especially populations experiencing inequities or disparities.

This grant program will prioritize:

- Partner organizations working in cooperation with Minnesota State Colleges and Universities.
- Partner organizations whose efforts would target or serve meat or poultry processing operations that are in distressed communities, based on the [Economic Innovation Group's Distressed Communities Index \(DCI\)](#).

## How to apply

Applications are due by **4 p.m. Central Time (CT) on Monday, April 28, 2025**. We will not consider late applications.

- Apply using our [online application system](#).
  - If you are a new user, you'll need to create an account first.
  - Once you're logged in, select "Meat Processing Train & Retain Grant."
- Apply early so there is enough time to get technical assistance if needed.
  - It's best practice to submit your application at least 24 hours in advance.
  - We are not responsible for any technical or logistical problems that result in a late submission. It is your responsibility to ensure we receive your application before the deadline.

## Application guidelines

- Use plain, easily understood language. Write for reviewers who have general knowledge but may not have a thorough or deep understanding of your organization.
- Answer all questions completely within the character limits specified in the grant application.
- Review the [Project Evaluation Profile](#) included in this document as it is used to score and compare the grant applications.

## Timeline and deadlines

April 21, 2025, at 4 p.m. CT.....Deadline to ask grant program questions.

April 28, 2025, at 4 p.m. CT.....Applications due.

Mid May 2025.....Applicants notified of decisions; grant agreement process begins.

Late June 2025.....Anticipated start date for projects awarded funding.

## Questions

For questions on the grant program or application:

- Submit your question in writing before **4 p.m. CT on Monday, April 21, 2025**.
- Email [MDA.AGRIGrants@state.mn.us](mailto:MDA.AGRIGrants@state.mn.us) with "Meat Processing Train & Retain Grant" in the subject line.

MDA employees are not authorized to provide advice on any applications. Applicants who solicit or receive advice from unauthorized MDA employees may be disqualified from eligibility for a grant award.

For help with the online application system:

- Call 651-201-6500, or email [MDA.AGRIGrants@state.mn.us](mailto:MDA.AGRIGrants@state.mn.us) for technical assistance.
- Include "Train and Retain Program" in the subject line.

# Grant Eligibility

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## Eligible applicants

Applicants must:

- Be considered a partner organization (one of the following):
  - Foundation engaged in economic development
  - Community development financial institution
  - Federally recognized economic development district
  - Community development corporation
- Be in good standing with the State of Minnesota, including but not limited to:
  - Have acceptable performance on past MDA grants.
  - Be registered with the Secretary of State and Attorney General's Office, as applicable.

## Collaboration

Eligible applicants may collaborate with other partner organizations, but it's not required. If eligible organizations are submitting a joint application, they must determine which entity or organization will have the grant contract agreement with the MDA and work directly with the MDA to meet grant reporting requirements. Note that this organization may receive a 1099 from the State of Minnesota for income tax purposes.

All applicants are strongly encouraged to provide letters or support from processors who are directly impacted by the project.

## Eligible projects and expenses

Projects must:

- Aim to increase or incentivize new employee training and retention at small- to medium-sized meat or poultry processing businesses in Minnesota. For the purposes of this grant, "small- to medium-sized meat or poultry processor" means a meat or poultry processor licensed by the state of Minnesota or the federal government that has fewer than 150 employees.
- Be conducted in Minnesota.

Eligible expenses include but are not limited to:

- Tuition reimbursement for programs at Minnesota State Colleges and Universities
- Sign-on or retention bonuses for new hires
- Employee relocation assistance
- Employee housing cost reimbursement
- Childcare stipends
- Employee transportation cost reimbursement
- Up to 20% of the grant may be used for direct services to employees, including but not limited to translation services

Partner organizations must agree to minimize administrative costs as a condition of the grant. We expect that applicants request to use no more than 10% of the total award for administrative costs, but the MDA will consider reasonable costs more than this amount. All anticipated administrative costs must be justified in the proposal.

## **Ineligible expenses**

Ineligible expenses include but are not limited to:

- Expenditures incurred prior to the full execution of the grant contract agreement or its start date, whichever occurs later, and those incurred after the expiration of the grant contract agreement
- Owner or employee salary costs or salary subsidies
- Expenditures related to incentivizing or promoting current employees (e.g., additional paid time off (PTO) for current employees, wage raises, bonuses for current employees)
- Expenditures related to hiring an employee who has been employed in the previous 90 days by another licensed meat or poultry processing plant in Minnesota with fewer than 150 employees
- Indirect costs (expenses of doing business that are not readily identified with the project)
- Donations and in-kind contributions, including property and services, made by the applicant (regardless of the recipient)
- Public relations, advertising, or recruiting for open jobs
- Fundraising
- Taxes, except sales tax on goods and services and payroll taxes
- Lobbyists, political contributions
- Bad debts, late payment fees, finance charges, or contingency funds
- Parking violations and traffic violations
- Out-of-state transportation and travel expenses without prior approval. Minnesota will be considered the home state for determining whether travel is out of state.

# Application Review Policies

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## Review process

MDA staff and external reviewers evaluate all eligible applications based on the criteria in the Project Evaluation Profile. Reviewers may recommend whole or partial funding of a project. The commissioner of agriculture reviews the recommendations and makes the award decisions. Reviewers, staff, and the commissioner may consider geographic distribution, applicant's history as a state grantee including progress made on previous grants, compliance with state rules and regulations, and capacity to perform the work.

We will notify applicants, both successful and unsuccessful, in writing. Applicants may request a summary of reviewer comments.

## Conflicts of interest

State grant policy requires that steps and procedures are in place to prevent individual and organizational conflicts of interest, both in reference to applicants and reviewers ([MINN. STAT.16B.98](#) and [Conflict of Interest Policy for State Grant-Making, 2022 \(Word\)](#)).

Organizational conflicts of interest occur when:

- A grantee or applicant is unable or potentially unable to give impartial assistance or advice to the MDA due to competing duties or loyalties.
- A grantee's or applicant's objectivity in carrying out the grant is or might be otherwise impaired due to competing duties or loyalties.

An example of a conflict of interest would be an external party (such as a vendor) writing an application for an applicant when that external party stands to profit from the grant award.

In cases where a conflict of interest is suspected, disclosed, or discovered, the applicant or grantee will be notified and actions will be pursued, including but not limited to disqualification from eligibility for the grant award or termination of the grant agreement.

## Privacy notice and data classification

The information provided by an applicant will be used to assess the applicant's eligibility to receive a grant under this program. The decision to apply for this grant is voluntary, and applicants are not legally required to provide any of the requested information. Applicants may decline to complete this application without any legal consequence. However, only completed applications will be considered for a grant; incomplete applications will not be considered.

Data provided in this application is initially classified by the [Minnesota Data Practices Act](#) as private or nonpublic, although some or all of the data will generally become public at various points of the application process unless the data are otherwise classified by state or federal law. Access to private or nonpublic data is limited to those authorized by law, including but not necessarily limited to MDA staff and contractors with a

valid work assignment to access the data, parties authorized by the applicant, parties identified in a valid court order or federal subpoena, Minnesota Management and Budget, Minnesota Department of Administration, the state auditor, and the legislative auditor. If necessary, the MDA may also share the data with law enforcement or the Office of the Attorney General.

Per Minnesota's statute on grants ([MINN. STAT. 13.599](#)):

- Names and addresses of grant applicants, and the grant amount requested, will be public data once application responses are opened.
- All remaining data in application responses (except for data otherwise classified by law, including trade secret information, see below) becomes public data after the evaluation process is completed (for the purposes of this grant, when all grant agreements have been fully executed).
- All data created or maintained by the MDA as part of the evaluation process (except trade secret information, see below) will generally be public data after the evaluation process is completed.

Procedure for claiming protection of trade secrets:

Trade secret information is classified as not public data. In order to qualify as trade secret information, the data in question must be provided to the MDA by the affected person (i.e. the data must be about the applicant) and otherwise meet the legal definition found in statute ([MINN. STAT. 13.37, subd. 1\(b\)](#)). In order for an applicant to assert trade secret protection for data submitted as part of this application: the applicant must: 1) clearly identify the specific formula, pattern, compilation, program, device, method, technique, or process that the applicant believes to be trade secret information; 2) describe what efforts the applicant takes to maintain the secrecy of the data; and 3) adequately explain how the data derive(s) independent economic value from not being generally known to, and not readily ascertainable by proper means by, other persons. Merely asserting trade secret protection does not, in and of itself, classify the data in question as not public; determining what data meet the definition of trade secret information is ultimately the legal responsibility of the MDA, and the MDA cannot guarantee that data identified as trade secret information by an applicant will be classified as such. If the MDA determines that data do not meet the definition of trade secret information, the data in question will be available to the public unless the applicant secures a court order saying otherwise.

All persons, businesses, and individuals applying for grants in the state of Minnesota must comply with applicable laws. Under the law titled Right of Setoff ([MINN. STAT. 270C.65, subd. 3](#)), a grantee consents to disclosure of its social security number, federal employer tax identification number, and/or Minnesota tax identification number, already provided to the State, to federal and state tax agencies, and to state personnel involved in the payment of state obligations. These identification numbers may be used in the enforcement of federal and state tax laws which could result in action requiring a grantee to file state tax returns and pay delinquent state tax liabilities, if any.



# Requirements for Grant Recipients

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## Pre-award risk assessment

Under [Policy 08-06: Policy on Pre-Award Risk Assessment for Potential Grantees \(PDF\)](#) the MDA is required to complete a pre-award risk assessment of grantees selected to receive a grant award of \$50,000 or greater. Applicants will be asked to submit documents relevant to their entity.

If the MDA determines that the awardee has substantial risks that inhibit its ability to perform the required duties under the grant contract agreement, then the MDA may either request more information for the purpose of satisfying the concerns, develop a risk mitigation plan to protect the interests of the state, or not award the grant.

## Nonprofit organizations

- A description of your organization's capacity to complete the project; this includes your current staffing, budget, and previous experience performing similar work. You will also need to indicate if your organization has received any grants from the MDA in the last five years.
- A copy of the non-profit's two most recent Internal Revenue Service Forms Form 990 or 990-EZ. If the non-profit has not been in existence long enough or is not required to file Form 990 or Form 990-EZ, then they must submit the following information:
  - Proof of its tax-exempt status
  - Board-reviewed financial statements for the two most recent business years, or for new organizations, actual financial statements for the periods that are available and pro forma financial projections for at least a two-year period.
  - Documentation of its internal controls
- The two most recent certified financial audits if required to complete one under [MINN.STAT. 309.53, Subd. 3.](#)
- Confirmation that it is in good standing with the Office of the Secretary of State.
- Confirmation that none of its current board members or staff with authority to access grant funds have been convicted of a felony financial crime in the last 10 years.

## Political subdivisions

- A description of your entity's capacity to complete the project; this includes your current staffing, budget, and previous experience performing similar work. You will also need to indicate if your entity has received any grants from the Minnesota Department of Agriculture in the last five years.
- Confirmation that none of its current public officials, board members, or staff with authority to access grant funds have been convicted of a felony financial crime in the last 10 years.

## Grant award agreement

Grant contract agreement templates are available for review on the [Office of Grants Management Forms and FAQs](#) webpage.

Upon approval of an application, completion of the pre-award risk assessment, and before beginning work on the grant project(s) and receiving reimbursements, the applicant must:

- Complete an IRS W-9 form or register as a vendor in SWIFT, the state's accounting system, or confirm that the information in SWIFT is still correct.
- Submit other required documentation within 30 days of award notification.
- Sign a grant contract agreement showing their intention to complete the proposed tasks. This agreement must be signed within 30 days of being sent to the grantee.
- Applicants should anticipate that grant contracts will have an end date of June 2026 and may not be extended.

## **Accountability and reporting**

Grantees will be required to submit progress reports with each payment request (at least semi-annually) and a final report at the completion of the project. Grant payments shall not be made on grants with past due progress reports unless the MDA has given the grantee a written extension.

The MDA may also ask grantees to respond to requests for follow-up information for three years beyond the term of the grant agreement. This data is used to help the MDA increase the effectiveness of the program.

Information reported to the MDA may be classified as public data. Failure to regularly report, respond to surveys, and promptly respond to information requests may impact the grantee's ability to secure future funding from the MDA.

## **Payments**

Eligible expenses may only be incurred after the grant contract agreement has been signed by all parties.

Grant funds are dispersed on a reimbursement basis; the frequency of reimbursement requests may be negotiated with the MDA. All grantee requests for reimbursement must correspond to the approved grant budget.

The MDA will perform a financial reconciliation of at least one invoice on grants greater than or equal to \$50,000. Financial reconciliation may be performed on additional payment requests at the discretion of the MDA. For this purpose, the grantee must provide expense receipts, employee timesheets, invoices, and any other supporting documents requested by the State.

Grant payments may be used to fulfill federal and state tax liabilities or may be withheld until the grantee has paid any tax liabilities (MINN. STAT. 270C.65, Subd. 3 and other applicable laws).

## **Site visits**

The grant agreement allows the MDA to monitor the progress of the project. The MDA will perform a monitoring visit for all grantees with awards of more than \$25,000 before a final payment is approved and annual monitoring visits for all grantees receiving more than \$250,000. Other grantees may receive monitoring visits at the discretion of the MDA.

## **Bidding requirements**

All funded applicants must abide by the state's [bidding requirements](#) for larger purchases.

## **Publicity**

All projects funded must publicly credit this funding, including on the grantee's website when practical.

## **Affirmative action and non-discrimination policy**

The grantee agrees not to discriminate against any employee or applicant for employment because of race, color, creed, religion, national origin, sex, marital status, status in regard to public assistance, membership or activity in a local commission, disability, sexual orientation, or age in regard to any position for which the employee or applicant for employment is qualified ([MINN. STAT. 363A.02](#)). The grantee agrees to take affirmative steps to employ, advance in employment, upgrade, train, and recruit minority persons, women, and persons with disabilities.

The grantee must not discriminate against any employee or applicant for employment because of physical or mental disability in regard to any position for which the employee or applicant for employment is qualified. The grantee agrees to take affirmative action to employ, advance in employment, and otherwise treat qualified disabled persons without discrimination based upon their physical or mental disability in all employment practices such as the following: employment, upgrading, demotion or transfer, recruitment, advertising, layoff or termination, rates of pay or other forms of compensation, and selection for training, including apprenticeship ([Minnesota Rules, part 5000.3500](#)).

The grantee agrees to comply with the rules and relevant orders of the Minnesota Department of Human Rights issued pursuant to the [Minnesota Human Rights Act](#).

## **Audits of project**

The grantee's books, records, documents, and accounting procedures and practices of the grantee or other party that are relevant to the grant or transaction are subject to examination by the MDA, the Department of Administration, and either the legislative auditor or the state auditor, as appropriate ([MINN. STAT. 16B.98, subd. 8](#)).

The grantee is responsible for the retention of documents and records relevant to the grant. This requirement will last for a minimum of six years from the grant agreement end date, receipt and approval of all final reports, or the required period of time to satisfy all state and program retention requirements, whichever is later.

## **Voter registration requirement**

The grantee will provide voter registration services for its employees ([MINN. STAT. 201.162](#)).

# Project Evaluation Profile

Evaluation criteria	Maximum score
<p><b>Eligibility</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Applicant is a partner organization (e.g., economic development foundation, community development financial institution, federally recognized economic development district, or community development corporation).</li> <li>• Applicant is in good standing with the State of Minnesota.</li> </ul>	Y/N
<p><b>Project overview and need</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Applicant articulates the need and potential impact of this project.</li> <li>• Proposed outcomes of project are realistic for the size of budget request.</li> <li>• Applicant identifies meat and poultry processors they will serve.</li> </ul>	20
<p><b>Qualifications and experience</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Applicant has organizational capacity to manage the grant.</li> <li>• Applicant has strong understanding and demonstrated experience related to working with meat and poultry processors.</li> <li>• Applicant has a history of performing the type of work funded by the grant.</li> <li>• Applicant has relevant assets such as key personnel, current budget, past grant experience, or internal financial policies or controls.</li> </ul>	20
<p><b>Priority areas</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Applicant is working in partnership with Minnesota State Colleges and Universities.</li> <li>• Applicant’s project would target or serve meat or poultry processing operations that are located in distressed communities based on DCI scores.</li> </ul>	15
<p><b>Work plan</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Work plan is thorough and realistic.</li> <li>• A detailed description of each step of the grant project is provided with estimated dates.</li> </ul>	15
<p><b>Budget</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Budget clearly details all project costs.</li> <li>• Budget is cost effective and reasonable.</li> </ul>	15
<p><b>Outreach and evaluation plan</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Applicant’s plan for outreach is thorough and effective.</li> <li>• Applicant’s plan for evaluation is thorough and effective.</li> </ul>	15
<p><b>Total</b></p>	<b>100</b>

# Application Questions

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## Contact information

### Applicant information

- Point of Contact name
- Point of Contact title
- Point of Contact telephone number
- Point of Contact email address
- Organization legal name
- Organization mailing address
- Organization county
- Organization telephone number
- Organization email
- Minnesota State House District (use the [District Finder](#) if you don't know your district.)

### Authorized representative

- If awarded a grant, is the person authorized to sign contracts on behalf of the organization the same as the Point of Contact person listed above? (Yes or No)
  - If no, please provide the following Authorized Representative information for signing any resulting grant contract agreement:
    - Name
    - Telephone number
    - Email

### Eligibility

- My organization is: (Check all that apply)
  - A foundation engaged in economic development
  - A community development financial institution
  - A federally recognized economic development district
  - A community development corporation
- Confirm that the following statements apply to you and your organization.
  - My organization has an active registration with the Minnesota Secretary of State and will maintain one for the entirety of the grant period if awarded.
  - If my organization is a nonprofit, it is appropriately registered with the Minnesota Office of the Attorney General. (Yes or Not Applicable)
  - I attest that I have the authority to apply on behalf of the organization and no other application is being submitted from this organization. (Yes)
  - The current principals of the organization have not been convicted of a financial crime such as theft, embezzlement, or forgery in the last 10 years. Principals include public officials, board members, and staff with the authority to access funds provided by the MDA or determine how those funds are used.

## Project overview and need

### Grant request

- Project name
- Total grant request
- Project start date
- Project end date

### Project description

- Summarize what your organization will do with this grant funding. (1,000 characters, including spaces)
- Describe the meat and poultry processors your organization will support. How many processors will you be supporting? (1,000 characters, including spaces)
- With this funding, will you be working with any new meat and poultry processors in addition to your past/current processing clients? Please explain. (1,000 characters, including spaces)
- If you are collaborating with another organization for this project, describe their role in the project. You can upload a letter of support from this organization at the end of the application. (1,000 characters, including spaces)

## Qualifications and experience

### Organization summary

- Provide a summary of your organization. (1,000 characters, including spaces) The summary should stand alone to describe:
  - The mission and goals of your organization.
  - The services and products provided by your organization.
  - The ownership and leadership of your organization.

### Organizational capacity

- Provide a summary of your organization's capacity. (1,000 characters, including spaces)
  - Describe your organization's capacity to manage the grant, if received.
  - Describe your history of performing the work that will be funded by the grant.
- Describe any other relevant assets such as key personnel, current budget, past grant experience, or internal financial policies or controls to demonstrate your organization's capacity to manage the grant. (1,000 characters, including spaces)

### Meat and poultry experience

- Describe your organization's experience working with meat or poultry processors. If you do not have experience in this industry, explain how your other workforce development experience will be translated to this industry. (1,000 characters, including spaces)

## Priority areas

- Will your organization be working with Minnesota State Colleges or Universities on this project? (Yes or No)
  - If yes, describe how your organization will be partnering with Minnesota State Colleges or Universities. (500 characters, including spaces)
- Will your organization be directly targeting or serving operations that are located in distressed communities based on their DCI scores? (Yes or No)
  - If yes, describe how your organization will be directly targeting or serving these operations. (500 characters, including spaces)

## Work plan

- Complete the following table, or upload a table with the same information. Describe the activities you plan to undertake and include the steps you will take to successfully complete your project. For example, you might include target dates for developing an outreach plan or requesting applications. You may add additional lines as necessary.

Timeframe	Description of task or action item	Responsible party
August 2025	Begin development of outreach plan	Project director
-	-	-

## Budget

Instructions: This application has three budget sections for you to complete.

- Train and Retain budget for all processing employee training and retention expenses
- Administrative budget for organizational administrative costs
- Direct services budget for direct services to employees

### Train and Retain grant request

- Grant funds requested for employee training and retention expenses.

### Train and Retain budget narrative

- Explain how you determined how much funding to request for employee training and retention expenses. (2,000 characters, including spaces)

### Administrative budget table

- Complete the following table, or upload a table with the same information. You may add additional lines as necessary.
- You may request a reasonable amount of funding for organizational administrative costs. The amount requested must be consistent with other comparable funding opportunities. Grantees must agree to minimize the administrative costs as a condition of the grant agreement. Administrative costs may be negotiated at the time of award.

Expense (e.g., personnel, travel, office space)	Short description	Funds requested
Personnel	Sarah Smith, coordinator	\$1,200
Rental	Sarah Smith's office space	\$500
-	-	-

### Administrative budget narrative

- Respond to the following prompts. (3,000 characters, including spaces)
  - Detail how the funds will be used and justify each expense listed in the budget table.
  - Explain how the expenses outlined in the budget table are necessary for completing the work described in your application.

### Direct services budget table

- Complete the following table, or upload a table with the same information. You may add additional lines as necessary.
- Direct services may account for up to 20% of your requested grant total.

Expense	Funds requested
Translation services	\$2,000
-	-

### Direct services budget narrative

- Respond to the following prompts. (3,000 characters, including spaces)
  - Detail how the funds will be used and justify each expense listed in the budget table.
  - Explain how the expenses outlined in the budget table will enable you to incentivize or increase meat and poultry processing employee hiring and retention.



## Outreach and evaluation

- Describe your outreach plan for this project. How will you communicate available funding assistance to local meat or poultry processors? (2,000 characters, including spaces)
  - Describe your methods for conducting outreach.
  - How is your organization currently working with the meat or poultry processing businesses/recipients?
- Describe your plan to measure the impact of assisting small- to medium-sized meat and poultry processors with hiring and training new employees. (2,000 characters, including spaces)
- Describe any project partners or collaborators (if applicable) and the specific role and responsibilities of each in the project. (1,000 characters, including spaces)
- (Optional) Upload letters of support. If you have more than three, merge them into a single file before uploading. Letters can be written by:
  - Meat or poultry processors you will be serving.
  - Industry stakeholders, community groups, or organizations relevant to your organization's work.
  - Partner organizations you may be collaborating with.