General

What is a good example of an LFPP planning grant?
Market research on the demand, potential prices and types of products needed to make a new local retail food market financially viable.

I'm looking at using the LFPP as part of a much larger project, the branding and marketing piece of a local moderate size animal processing plant. How do I tell the whole story or do I need to?
You should tell the whole story, particularly if USDA AMS money is being leveraged by other monies to assure the project is launched based on good market research, business planning and community partnerships that will assure the supply chain supporting that plant is strong.

Do you have any advice for those re-applying for the same project after having been rejected when applying under the same program in the previous year? Will it be reviewed with completely fresh eyes, or will it be docked for fact that it was previously rejected?
I think it is rare that you will have the same reviewers, so assume there will be fresh eyes reviewing. But you should be thoughtful about addressing any concerns past reviewers had... especially if they referenced other projects or work you could learn from.

What is meant by critical resources and/or infrastructure?
These are those essential to operations... perhaps you don't want rent for an office where just administrative tasks are being done? Especially if there is community shared-space? Also, think about if any of the facilities you need are already there in your community (a value-added kitchen as an example), and if renting that space some of the time rather than building a new space makes sense.

My project is working with a local farmers' market with interest in consolidating two markets into one, adding SNAP EBT & Double Up Food Bucks, etc. The first portion would be a FM assessment and the second portion would be to implement recommendations. Is it too much to include an assessment and implementation portions of the grant? Or, should I only focus on the assessment?
Personally, I would do the steps one at a time, especially since FMPP competes every year and you can follow up with the second step already in the coming year. So yes, assess first!!

We submitted a proposal last year and were not awarded. We were able to do some of the activities in that proposal. It is worthwhile and valuable to reviewers to note what we did, the outcomes, how we're building on that in this year's proposal?
Yes! This shows great commitment and follow through. But, be very clear as to what more you can do (for more producers, activities, consumers) if you have more resources to invest.

Two partner foods hubs plus a transportation partner each have a local-facing market and together an urban facing market. Can we fold them both into one proposal or is this two proposals?
The answer to this depends (in my opinion). If some of the implementation plan is a set of shared activities you will undertake with these partners, applying together is a GREAT idea!! If it will feel piecemeal with distinct priorities each group is working on, the reviewer may notice that and prefer they are independent proposals.
If we have received three FMPP grants to date, do we need to reference each, or only the most recent? (The first one was from 2010 and isn't particularly relevant to what we'll be proposing.)

Please list all FMPP or LFPP grants previously received. The descriptions should not be long (maybe 3-4 sentences max). We just need to get the gist of how your organization’s work has evolved through FMLFPP funding.

If we’re proposing a multi-state project, must we choose one project implementation address from each state? Any tips on how to choose the implementation address if the project isn’t specific to a particular market, but rather is focused on producers and trainings in multiple locations in multiple states?

You are only required to enter up to three addresses where the project will be implemented. If you are requesting consideration as a priority area you may want to enter the implementation address for those areas. If your project will be implemented in rural areas or towns that have populations of 50,000 or less, enter those implementation addresses. Take into consideration our definition of locally or regional local food where the product originates and the point of sale to the end consumer is at most 400 miles.

Grant Fit

Can one organization apply to both sectors farmers market and local food promotion?
Yes, you may apply for both but if recommended for an award, your organization can only accept one FMPP OR one LFPP award. An organization that currently has an active (not closed-out) grant award from a previous year under either FMPP or LFPP may apply to receive an award under this RFA if the applicant submits all required close out documentation by the application due date.

It seems that FMLFPP is primarily interested in impacting farmers, whereas our organization is primarily interested in impacting consumers. Do you think an application that benefits farmers as a means of benefiting consumers will be competitive from AMS’ perspective?

Maybe... if the consumers' benefits include more awareness of what is available locally, or how to cook (which makes local purchases more common), than yes! It is all about building marketing activity for farms and food businesses in our communities. But if the focus is purely on healthful diets or eating on a budget, there are probably other programs that are a better fit.

What if we apply for an FMPP grant and specialty crop grant (with overlap in the proposals) and we have both funded... not likely but wondering if that is ok to even do assuming that only one will be funded if we are lucky.

Personally, I would keep the scope of work very separate for the two. It could be an issue if both are funded or a reviewer senses there is "double dipping." However, as long as the project is for different purposes and activities that will be ok.

Can planning grants be used for a small pilot program, after planning is finished? (CSU) Yes, we have used planning to pilot something in a small way, but realize your job is to very clearly document how data will be collected to assess market demand/feasibility and such. I think you could make a compelling case for how it is hard to learn some market information without pilot market
development... but then very much minimize any permanent investments in that pilot (new equipment and such).

Generally yes, a pilot study can be part of a planning grant. Please contact us so we can determine eligibility -based on the types of activities you are planning on the pilot project.

We are submitting a FMPP proposal, but it could fall easily under either the Capacity Building or the Community Development Training and Technical Assistance. Is there a benefit to applying to one vs. the other?

No, there is no benefit from applying to one or the other. Chose the one that best represents the objectives and activities of your project. The outcomes for the capacity building should be about the market organization itself and its sales development, whereas the training/tech assistance outcomes would be more about how the people involved gain expertise/knowledge. You may submit the application to both programs, but will only be awarded one or the other.

**Partners and Collaboration**

The RFA doesn't specifically mention letters of support from any non-partner/collaborator/contractor people or groups. Are these still necessary?

No...focus on letters from collaborators. The one exception may be if there is another organization in community that leads programming that directly complements your efforts, and can speak to the community's commitment to sustaining local food efforts in the long term.

Do collaborators need to sign off on or be part of the project management plan?

Not directly, but their letters should directly reference the roles laid out for them in that plan...so make sure they see it!

Is it a requirement to have a partner that you share the grant with? For example, my org would use the grant to benefit 40+ local farms. However, none of the farms would be directly responsible for managing the grant project. We would work with them to gather feedback, educate consumers, and promote the market. They would very much be involved with the project but would not technically be a grant "partner" because they are not directly receiving the grant funds. However, they do directly benefit. Is it problematic if my org's proposal does not have technical "partner" organizations (but does benefit a number of local farmers)?

It is fine to not have partners, but think hard about how you share resources. At least when I am a reviewer, if I am asking producers to attend meetings, share their knowledge and expertise on markets, or pilot new activities you are implementing, are you sharing resources with them for their time? expertise? Risk of trying new activities markets? I always look favorably at those who distribute grant funds to all investing their time. But no, they don't have to be formal partners, maybe you just budget for stipends?

**Budget**

If a salaried job being performed 100% for the project would typically command of salary of, for example, $60,000. Can $45,000 be paid by the LFPP grant project and the additional $15,000 (unpaid) be claimed as In-kind contribution?
Yes, it is very typical to do just that. Grant supports a share of a salaried employee. Just be very clear whether the salaried employee is offering up the other 25% in kind (just going unpaid) or whether another source of funds will pay for that additional salary. Both are ok, but transparency is always appreciated.

Is it meaningful to highlight funds received from other Restaurants/Chefs who are supporting our efforts to reach local producers?
Yes!! Any time you can already show community activity that complements your efforts, it shows momentum, and indicates to the reviewer that there is long-term commitment to local foods in the area.

We are applying for a second planning grant to complete the planning portion of our development. Ideally, this would include contracting with a local law firm to prepare documents for launching a capital campaign, but not actually conducting the campaign (which we understand is not an allowable expense.) How would it be best to present this expense, perhaps as a capacity building? Is there specific language we should avoid using?
Yes, working with lawyers and other professionals to do the due diligence of building an organization’s infrastructure is allowable...so I think that is the best way to go.

What are some ideas for developing and demonstrating match?
Salary match is the easiest, as committed partners will commonly offer a break off their normal salary/wage rates, or be willing to work some share of their hours for free. In addition, you can call reduced rental or free use of meeting space, market booths or community kitchens as match at their normal market rate. If you have producers, chefs or other food system folks provide free food and beverage for events, and they are willing to document, that is match too!

The RFP says in section 3.4 that the match must be in place at proposal submission (or committed already); later in section 4.6..4 it says pre-award match can only include costs from within 90 days of the award. Doesn’t that mean that any costs in place AT THE TIME of proposal submittal can’t apply to the match?
No...the commitment to match is all that is needed by the time of application. That later language simply says you should not start investing the match funds before you actually begin your scope of work. One is a commitment, one is the actual use of those in-kind resources.

Is it acceptable to fund a Grant/Project Manager for the FMPP Capacity Building Grant?
It depends. If that person is in charge of evaluating outcomes for the grant activities, then yes! But if it is for only pure admin, that may be hard to justify.

Is there a 100% match requirement?
No, only LFPP grants have a 25% match requirement of the total project budget.

Can federal funding dollars be used to match the 25% in LFPP?
No, federal funds cannot be used for the match. Additionally, contributions cannot satisfy a cost sharing or matching requirement for this grant program if they are used towards satisfying a match requirement under any other Federal grant agreement the applicant is party to.
I know construction costs are not eligible. However, for our co-op, we need to provide our specifications so would like to include store design and architectural plans. Are those activities eligible?
You may use funds for design and architectural plans for LFPP planning grants but not for implementation grants. We encourage applicants to consult with the USDA AMS marketing division services as they provide technical assistance in site selection, unit design concept, building cost study and coordination with local design professionals. Please go to https://www.ams.usda.gov/services/local-regional for more information.

For an awarded grant, how is the money disbursed?
Payments are disbursed through advance and reimbursements. Advance payments must be limited to amounts needed to meet actual and immediate cash needs.

We need cold storage (walk-in coolers) to allow for aggregation. Is the purchase of a walk-in cooler an allowable cost as Special Purchase Equipment in LFPP?
Yes, as long as it is used for to meet the objectives of the project. Equipment is subject to the full range of acquisition, use, management, and disposition requirements under 2 CFR § 200.313 as applicable.

Can you expand on the difference between contract and subaward?
A subaward is an award provided by the non-federal entity to a subrecipient for the subrecipient to carry out part of a Federal award received by the non-federal entity. Contractual/consultant costs are expenses associated with purchasing goods and/or procuring services performed by an individual or organization other than the applicant in the form of a procurement relationship.

Could an organization with a currently active LFPP project apply as the fiscal agent for another entity that was a partner in a new program?
Fiscal sponsors/agent may apply on behalf of an organization as the Authorized Organizational Representative and awarded entity as long as the Fiscal Sponsor does not have an open active grant. See section 3.3.1 in the RFAs. If the fiscal sponsor/agent is a partner in an active grant you may still apply to the program as long as your organization is not the organization awarded the grant or the Authorized Organizational Representative.

How do I show that an equipment purchase is not available through leasing in my proposal?
The budget section on the FMLFPP project narrative has the option to describe or justify the purchase or lease of equipment. Any justification should be described using that section.

Planning Your Proposal
If we have questions on our eligibility or a specific instruction - who is best to contact?
You can contact USDA AMS through email at USDAFMPPQuestion@ams.usda.gov; USDALFPPQuestion@ams.usda.gov or give us a call at 202-720-0933.

Formatting question - I sent in an application last year and my timeline formatted oddly, cut part of it off. I lost points because of it. Can you comment on formatting?
We recommend that applicants do their best to avoid altering the application template provided, and PDF all materials prior to submission. Be sure to review the PDFs for formatting prior to uploading into
the system. We cannot guarantee how the applications will upload into Grants.gov. Please allow ample
time before the deadline to ensure all materials are formatted correctly, tracked changes are accepted,
and all required application sections are completed.

**Should we plan to send a letter of intent before applying for the grant?**
No, letters of intent are not required and should not be submitted as part of the application process.

**Would it possible to get an example of a full application that was successful for FLPP Planning grant last year?**
You can review final reports for closed projects using the links below. We will only provide specific
applications as requested under Freedom of Information Act requests.
FMPP: https://www.ams.usda.gov/services/grants/fmpp/reports
LFPP: https://www.ams.usda.gov/services/grants/lfpp/reports

**USDA/Review/Resources**
**How competitive is LFPP program? How many grants are awarded?**
It is a very competitive program with a 11-12% success rate. FMLFPP receives around 900 applications
each year and we have historically made approximately 100 awards.

**Does these USDA grant programs use a point system to assess the applications?**
Yes, reviewers are given a template. These are outlined starting on page 32 here:

**Where do I get access to the AMS templates?**
The RFA has links to all the templates and documents you will need to submit your application.

**Where do I get the AMS toolkit?**
https://localfoodeconomics.com/

**Where do I get access to the FMPP evaluation criteria?**
You can find the list of the evaluation criteria’s and their description in Section 5.1 of the RFA’s.

**Where do I access the RFA?**
Go to https://www.ams.usda.gov/services/grants and click on the How to Apply page for the
responding program.

**Is there a way to talk with someone outside this call regarding a proposal idea?**
You can contact us through email at USDAFMPPQuestion@ams.usda.gov;
USDAFLPPPQuestion@ams.usda.gov or give us a call at 202-720-0933.

**Where can one find examples of successful proposals? Not a brief description of funded
grants, but the actual application/proposal that was successful.**
You can review final reports for closed projects using the links below. We will only provide specific
applications as requested under Freedom of Information Act requests.
FMPP: https://www.ams.usda.gov/services/grants/fmpp/reports
LFPP: https://www.ams.usda.gov/services/grants/lfpp/reports
**Summit**

Is it required for grantees to attend this summit?
No, but they are highly encouraged! More specifics about the Summit will be forthcoming in the next month or two.

Can attendance of this summit be built into the grant budget?
Yes, FMLFPP grant funds to attend the Summit if the objectives of their project include aspects of direct marketing activities.

Is there a cost associated with the summit?
Yes, although as indicated above, some may be supportable through a grant award.

**Policy**

I have heard that the new Farm Bill may result in cuts to these programs (LFPP, FMPP, CFP). Do you know otherwise?
At this time, we are unsure of exactly what the next Farm Bill will bring. In the version of the 2018 Farm Bill passed by the House Agriculture Committee on April 18th FMLFPP was included, but the funding provided to the program is to be subject to annual appropriations. No mandatory funding was included, but appropriations authority remained the same at $30 million per year through 2023. This can be viewed as a potential elimination of the program. The next stop for the Farm Bill is the House floor for consideration and a vote by every Member of Congress. This isn’t expected to take place until the week of May 14th.

If you are applying or an LFPP or FMPP, or any program supported by the Farm Bill, then call your representatives and tell them how you feel about these programs. You can call the Congressional switchboard at (202) 224-3121, and the operator will connect you directly with your member of Congress. Or, find your representative and their contact information at: https://www.house.gov/representatives/find-your-representative. You can also visit the National Sustainable Agriculture Coalition (http://sustainableagriculture.net/) to stay abreast of the most recent Farm Bill developments and learn other ways that you can get involved and make your opinions heard on the Hill.