



Wisconsin Resilient Food Systems Infrastructure Program (RFSI)

## **Equipment-Only Grant**

Request for Proposals

Proposals must be received by no later than 5:00 PM on Monday, 7/21/2025.

Submit full proposals to [RFSI@wi.gov](mailto:RFSI@wi.gov) or mail to  
2811 Agriculture Drive, P.O. Box 8911 Madison, WI 53708-8911.

For questions, email [RFSI@wi.gov](mailto:RFSI@wi.gov) or call Grace Puc at (608) 893-0431.

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## FUNDING DETAILS

Section 1001(b)(4) of the American Rescue Plan Act (ARPA) of 2021 (Pub. L. 117— 2), as amended, authorizes the United States Department of Agriculture (USDA), to make grants and agreements to maintain and improve food and agricultural supply chain resiliency. The Wisconsin Department of Agriculture, Trade and Consumer Protection (DATCP) received a total of \$27,000,000 to award in Infrastructure Grants and Equipment-Only Grants in the first round, which closed to applications on March 6<sup>th</sup>, 2024. 71 subrecipients were awarded.

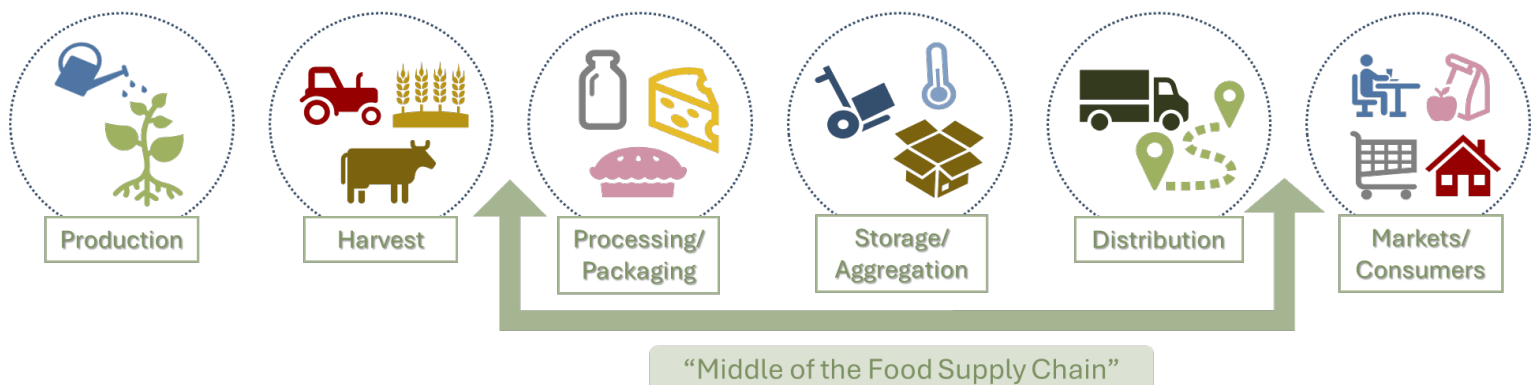
This Request for Proposals (RFP) is for a second round of Equipment-Only Grant awards, which is a limited program compared to the previous round in terms of the equipment items eligible for an award. Awards can range from \$10,000 up to \$99,999. This is a reimbursement grant, meaning subrecipients will have to pay for project costs themselves and then seek reimbursement for those expenditures from DATCP. ALL EXPENSES MUST BE INCURRED BY 12/31/2025.

## PROGRAM OVERVIEW

The purpose of the Resilient Food Systems Infrastructure Program (RFSI) is to expand capacity and infrastructure for the aggregation, processing, manufacturing, storing, transporting, wholesaling, and distribution of locally and regionally produced food products. Eligible food products are those for human consumption and include specialty crops, dairy, grains, aquaculture, and others. Products ineligible for funding are meat, poultry, wild-caught seafood, animal feed/forage products, fiber, landscaping products, tobacco, and dietary supplements.

Equipment-Only Grants must expand middle of the food supply chain\* capacity for locally and regionally produced foods. They must also offer more and better market opportunities to small and mid-sized agricultural producers. This program prioritizes increased access for those who may not have access to value-added opportunities/processing infrastructure to meet market demand for premium or value-added products\*\*.

\*The food supply chain describes the process of getting food from the farm to end consumers. According to the USDA, it involves the following stages: 1. Production, 2. Processing, 3. Aggregation/Distribution, and 4. Markets/Consumers. For the purposes of the RFSI program, “middle of the food supply chain” or “middle-of-the-supply-chain” refers to **2. Processing** and **3. Aggregation/Distribution**. This encompasses activities ranging from post-harvest to pre-consumer-facing-market.



**\*\*As defined by the USDA, a “value-added product” under this program is a raw agricultural product that has been modified or enhanced through processing to have a higher market value and/or a longer shelf life. This does not include products whose value increased because of growing practices (i.e. organic). This can include fruits made into jams or pies, wheat turned into flour, or tomatoes and peppers becoming salsa. Value-added food products may also be those increased in value by packaging.**

## ELIGIBLE APPLICANTS

**Previous RFSI Infrastructure and Equipment-Only Grant subrecipients are not eligible for this award.** All applicant businesses and organizations must be domestically owned, and the applicants’ facilities must be physically located within the State of Wisconsin.

Entities eligible for Equipment-Only Grants are:

1. **For-profit entities** operating middle-of-the-supply-chain activities such as processing, aggregation, or distribution of eligible agricultural products, whose activities are primarily focused for the benefit of local and regional producers.
  - a. For-profit entities must qualify as a “small business” under the eligibility requirements of the SBA to apply. To determine whether a business qualifies, please use the [Size Standards Tool](#). Users will be prompted to use the North American Industry Classification System (NAICS) code associated with their industry to determine the relevant requirements. NAICS codes can be found at [Census.gov](#). For more information on these size standards, please visit [SBA’s Size Standards webpage](#).
2. **Nonprofit organizations** operating middle-of-the-supply-chain activities such as processing, aggregation, or distribution of eligible agricultural products, whose activities are primarily focused for the benefit of local and regional producers.
3. **Agricultural producers or processors, or groups/cooperatives of agricultural producers and processors**, with projects that focus on middle-of-the-supply-chain activities such as processing, aggregation, or distribution of targeted agricultural products.
  - a. All for-profit entities must meet the relevant SBA small business size standard to apply for this program, even if the applicant is a producer or processor (see Eligible Entities 1a, above). If the group of agricultural producers or co-op is a for-profit entity, it must also meet the SBA small business size standards to apply for this program.
4. **Local government entities** operating middle-of-the-supply-chain activities such as processing, aggregation, or distribution of eligible agricultural products.
5. **Tribal governments** operating middle-of-the-supply-chain activities such as processing, aggregation, or distribution of eligible agricultural products.
6. **Institutions** such as schools, universities, or hospitals bringing producers together to establish cooperative or shared infrastructure or invest in equipment that will benefit multiple producers middle-of-the-supply-chain activities such as processing, aggregation, or distribution of eligible agricultural product.

## ELIGIBLE EXPENSES

Equipment-Only awards will fund equipment items in the following four categories, to be used for eligible, middle of the food supply chain activities. **All awarded equipment items must be purchased on or before 12/31/2025.**

- Food processing equipment that does not require ground disturbance to install.
- Cold storage that does not require ground disturbance to install.
- Forklifts and skid steers.
- Special-purpose delivery vehicles.

Eligible expenses must adhere to the following criteria.

- Equipment-Only Grants are only for purchasing special purpose equipment as defined in section 8.2 of the [AMS General Terms and Conditions](#) and section 2.0 of the [RFSI Program Specific Terms and Conditions](#). Equipment purchased with RFSI funding must be:
  - Tangible personal property with a useful life of more than one year.
  - Necessary for the technical activities of the agreement.
  - Normally charged as a direct cost by the organization and is acquired in accordance with organizational practices.
  - Used solely to meet the purpose of the program and objectives of the agreement.
  - Subject to the full range of acquisition, use, management, and disposition requirements under [2 CFR § 200.313](#), as applicable.
- Equipment can be new or used.
- The cost of shipping, equipment accessories and/or simple installation provided by the equipment vendor may be included in the cost of purchasing a piece of equipment so long as the cost is included in a corresponding quote.

## INELIGIBLE EXPENSES

The following are not eligible for funding.

- Equipment items outside of the four categories listed as eligible.
- Equipment items that require ground disturbance for their installation or pre-installation (ex: a cold storage unit that requires a concrete pad to be poured prior to installation).
- Projects focused on ineligible products.
  - Products ineligible for funding: meat, poultry, wild- caught seafood, animal feed/forage products, fiber, landscaping products, tobacco, or dietary supplements.
  - However, for each budget item that handles a combination of eligible and ineligible products, the requested funding **must be prorated**.
    - For example, if a refrigerated delivery vehicle is requested to transport meat, produce, and dairy products, the applicant would need to estimate what average percent freezer space is used for exclusively produce and dairy, and request funding for that percentage of the freezer cost only.
- Expenses incurred before a signed contract's project start date.
- Expenses that have been, or will be, reimbursed under any Federal, State, or local government funding.
- Supplanting or duplicating ongoing activities.
  - Projects with funding from another federal grant or subaward may not receive funding for the same

activities through an Equipment-Only Grant. However, Equipment-Only Grants may build on the successes of prior/current funding.

- Modernizing existing equipment or facilities through upgrades, repairs, or retooling.
- Marketing or marketing-related activities.
- Harvest and/or production-related activities.
- Research.
- Training on the use of equipment purchased under the grant and associated new processes.
- Hiring term-limited personnel to assist with project implementation activities.
- Construction of a new facility.
- Analyzing potential facility upgrades and changes that meet regulatory requirements, obtaining design and/or architecture services, etc.
- Planning for Hazard Analysis Critical Control Points (HACCP) or other food safety or worker safety measures or equipment recommendations.

## INDIRECT COSTS

Indirect costs cannot be charged to equipment purchases or capital expenses and, as such, indirect costs are not allowable for Equipment-Only grants.

## MATCH

Matching funds are not required for Equipment-Only grants.

## UNIQUE ENTITY ID (UEI)

All applicants are required to obtain a UEI in SAM.gov prior to completing their application. For information on how to get a UEI number, visit [SAM.gov](https://sam.gov).

In April of 2022, the Federal government phased out the DUNS number with the UEI number. Depending on when the main applicant last updated their DUNS number, it may now be considered a UEI number. If the code is nine-digits, that is a DUNS number and must be updated to a UEI number. If it is twelve-digits, then it may be used as a UEI number. Information on this transition is available at <https://sam.gov/content/duns-uei>.

## NATIONAL ENVIRONMENTAL POLICY ACT (NEPA)

All activities funded under this RFP must comply with the National Environmental Policy Act (NEPA) and related applicable agency regulations and instructions, Section 106 of the National Historic Preservation Act (NHPA), the Endangered Species Act (ESA), other laws and regulations as outlined therein, and any applicable state, local, or tribal laws. A review for NEPA compliance is required prior to the award of grant funds. If selected for an award, applicants must provide all requested information to support compliance with NEPA, NHPA, ESA, and all other federal environmental laws and regulations.

## APPLICATION MATERIALS

Application materials (templates) can be found at [DATCP Home Wisconsin Resilient Food Systems Infrastructure Program](#). There is no page limit for application materials nor a word count for individual questions. However, all application questions should be answered fully and succinctly. **Full proposals consist of all the following application materials.**

1. **RFSI Equipment-Only Grant Proposal** (USDA-AMS form).
2. **Quote or estimate to substantiate the cost of each piece of requested equipment.**
3. **Risk Assessment Survey.**
  - i. This assessment is required of all DATCP grantees and is used to gain an understanding of grant recipients' ability to manage State/Federal awards through a series of questions. The information gathered supports tailored grant administration plans including trainings, resource materials, and check-ins designed to support project success, but does not impact an applicant's ability to receiving funding. If selected for funding, grantees will be asked to attest to the accuracy of their responses.
4. **Applicant Environmental Questionnaire.**
  - i. The purpose of this document is to assist USDA-AMS staff in collecting adequate project information to complete an environmental evaluation in compliance with the National Environmental Policy Act (NEPA). Based on a review of the application submitted, further information may be requested.
5. **Evidence of Critical Resources and Infrastructure Letter.**
  - i. "Critical resources and infrastructure" can be facilities, land, structures, utilities, and/or other resources that are essential for the proposed project activities.
  - ii. This letter may come from a project partner (such as the land or facility owner) or from the primary applicant themselves, addressed to "RFSI Review Team".
  - iii. Its purpose is to verify that the necessary resources, infrastructure, and permissions are in place to support the implementation of the project proposal. Use it to demonstrate that the applicant is permitted, able, and ready to install/use requested equipment.
6. **Letters of Support** (*optional*; maximum of 3).
  - i. Letters of support are from project partners, external stakeholders, and beneficiaries. They corroborate the applicant's proposal and highlight a project's importance and potential benefits.
  - ii. They should be signed and on some identifying document (ex. with letterhead).

## GRANT PROPOSAL FORM GUIDANCE

See below for specific guidance on select application questions. Refer to the *Review Process & Evaluation Criteria* section for information on how this form will be reviewed and scored.

**UEI:** Twelve-digit ID assigned through SAM.gov registration. All applicants must have a UEI to apply.

**Physical Address:** The physical address section must reflect the location the requested equipment would be located.

**Type of Applicant:** Select all checkboxes that apply to the applicant organization. If the first box is selected (*agricultural producers or processors*), applicants must also indicate what type of eligible business, nonprofit, or organization describes their entity.

**Project Title:** Ensure that the title is descriptive of the project and includes the applicant organization name, not just the activities to be conducted. The title should be able to easily identify/distinguish this project from other projects.

**Executive Summary:** This brief summary should contain all components from the provided instructions including the

project's overall purpose, middle-of-the-supply-chain activities, and outcomes to be completed by the end of the period of performance. An example of the style and content preferred can be found below:

*The Northwest Food Group (NFG) will establish an agreement with the Wisconsin Department of Agriculture to purchase a delivery vehicle and refrigerated container to support a Hmong Food Hub for aggregating and distributing cultural and specialty crops. The Hmong Food Hub provides value-added processing, aggregation, and distribution services, sourcing from local Hmong farmers and introducing Hmong produce to local and regional wholesale customers. The requested equipment will benefit a minimum of ten local Hmong producers by enhancing market opportunities, ensuring food safety regulations are met, and creating jobs in the middle of the supply chain.*

**Type of Agricultural Food Products:** Here, create a list containing each program-eligible agricultural item anticipated to be processed, stored, or distributed with the requested equipment. For example: *eggs, maple syrup, spinach from three producers, heirloom tomatoes, etc.* If there are too many varieties to list individually, groups such as *leafy greens, stone fruits, etc.*, are acceptable.

**Current Business Operations:**

- Identify the geographic area(s) in which the business operates. This could include towns, municipalities, counties, and tribal land within the State of Wisconsin.
- Describe all business operations currently being performed by the applicant organization, and any services being offered. For example, this could include CSA programs, wholesale customers served, value-added processing, partnerships with other organizations, etc. (Ineligible activities under this RFP may be included in this response as long as it is made clear that the equipment is being requested for eligible activities only.)
- Describe the applicant's relevant qualifications, experience, skills, financial capacity, identified partners or background to demonstrate funding readiness and ongoing business viability beyond the life of the grant.
- USE THIS SECTION TO CERTIFY THAT ANY AWARDED EQUIPMENT WILL BE PURCHASED ON OR BEFORE 12/31/2025.

**Specific Need:** Clearly identify an issue, problem, or need relevant to the middle-of-the-supply chain, how the project's activities will address the issue/problem/need(s), and the anticipated results the project will achieve.

**Impact:**

- Describe the impact this project would have, if awarded, and ensure that impact is relevant to the middle of the food supply chain and new or expanded market opportunities for local/regional producers. Please make specific reference to the "Expected Numbers" listed in the Expected Performance Measures tables below.
- Provide a breakdown and description of project beneficiaries including but not limited to the applicant organization, the community(s) served by the applicant organization, local/regional producers, other supply chain businesses (aggregators, processors, wholesalers, etc.), and consumers.
- Describe the project partners or external stakeholders who support the need for this project and why.

**Expected Performance Measures:** Provide expected numbers for the indicators impacted by this project's activities. Select N/A for indicators unrelated to the project. All expected numbers should be reasonable, and the applicant should have a way to track/measure/estimate them. If selected for funding, reporting on *actual* performance measures will be required.

- **Indicator 3.2:** "Local/regional agricultural producers" include farmers and ranchers but exclude processors.
- **Indicator 3.3:** "New local/regional products" include any item not previously offered by the grant recipient. For



example, lettuce that was previously sold wholesale by the box is now packaged and sold individually in clamshells (1 new product) and in a salad mix (1 new product) would be considered two new products.

- **Indicator 3.4:** In this context, USDA has defined “value-added product” as a raw agricultural product that has been modified or enhanced through processing or packaging to have a higher market value and/or a longer shelf life. This excludes products whose value increased because of growing practices (i.e. organic).
- **Indicator 3.5:** “New market-outlets” would include, for example, a restaurant, school district, or grocery store chain not previously a customer of the applicant’s product.

#### Equipment Budget Table:

- The leftmost column of the budget table (“#”) should be a numerical list of requested equipment items (first equipment listed is ‘1’, second line item is ‘2’, etc.).
- The “Purchase Price” column must reflect the total cost of the item, as listed in the provided cost documentation (quote, etc.). This number may be the same as the “Funds Requested” column or be greater than \$99,999, if applicable.
- Please ensure that a reasonable acquisition date prior to 12/31/25 is listed for each item in the budget table.
- “Funds requested” is the amount being requested by the grant program for the equipment item. The subtotal of these values (if more than one item is being requested) must be between \$10,000 and \$99,999.

#### Equipment Justification:

- Provide a description for each piece of equipment included in the budget (“Equipment #1: ...”).
- The narrative must provide clear details on how the requested equipment is special purpose, how it will be used for RFSI activities, and why it is critical to the success of the applicant’s RFSI project.
- Justification should clearly indicate that the requested funding is allowable and reasonable for the scope of the project.
- Reference the supporting cost documentation correlated with each line item. If necessary to supplement the supporting cost documentation (quote, etc.), provide a breakdown of the calculation used to derive the cost for a line item. For example, if funds requested are being prorated (see: *Ineligible Expenses*), describe that here.

## SUBMISSION INSTRUCTIONS

Submit full proposals by emailing attached files to [RFSI@wi.gov](mailto:RFSI@wi.gov) or mail to 2811 Agriculture Drive, P.O. Box 8911 Madison, WI 53708. For the naming of all digitally submitted documents, include the name of the applicant organization followed by the document type (ex: *Northwest Food Group Equipment #1 Quote*). Incomplete proposals with missing documents or unanswered questions may not be reviewed. Complete proposals must be received via email by 5:00 PM on 7/21/25 or be postmarked no later than 7/14/25, for applications to be received and digitized by the application deadline. Late proposals will not be accepted.

## REVIEW PROCESS & EVALUATION CRITERIA

All complete proposals submitted on time will be reviewed by DATCP and a panel of external independent grant reviewers. Reviewers will be scoring proposals based on the following criteria, including how clearly applications are written. Proposals will then be selected and submitted to USDA for review and approval.

Points Available	Evaluation Criteria
25	<p style="text-align: center;"><b><u>Readiness</u></b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Applicant clearly demonstrates having the resources, infrastructure, background, experience, skills, identified partners, financial capacity, business viability, and current operations necessary for the successful implementation and sustainability of their proposal.</li> <li>• Critical resources and/or infrastructure necessary to support the initiation and completion of the project are in place and clearly outlined in the Critical Resources and Infrastructure Letter.</li> <li>• Applicant affirms that any awarded equipment will be purchased on or before 12/31/2025.</li> </ul>
25	<p style="text-align: center;"><b><u>Need</u></b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Applicant identifies a clear and compelling middle-of-the-supply-chain issue, problem or need that the project will address.</li> <li>• The proposed project effectively addresses the identified issue, problem or need through eligible program activities.</li> <li>• Addressing the issue, problem or need contributes to the goals of the RFSI program: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>➤ Maintain and improve food and agricultural supply chain resiliency.</li> <li>➤ Expand capacity and infrastructure for the aggregation, processing, manufacturing, storing, transporting, wholesaling, and distribution of locally and regionally produced eligible food products.</li> <li>➤ Offer more and better market opportunities to small and mid-sized agricultural producers.</li> </ul> </li> </ul>
25	<p style="text-align: center;"><b><u>Impact</u></b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Applicant clearly describes the impact this project will have on strengthening and increasing the resiliency of the middle-of-the-supply-chain in Wisconsin, beyond benefiting only the main applicant.</li> <li>• Proposal clearly describes how this project will create new or expanded market opportunities for producers, processors, and other middle-of-the-supply-chain operations in Wisconsin.</li> <li>• Specific reference is made to the Expected Performance Measures tables to justify the expected outcomes provided by the applicant.</li> </ul>
10	<p style="text-align: center;"><b><u>Project Support</u></b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Applicant articulates project support from beneficiaries, partners, stakeholders, and other relevant individuals or organizations corroborating the need for and importance of the project.</li> <li>• Letters of support are attached and show full support.</li> </ul>
15	<p style="text-align: center;"><b><u>Budget</u></b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Budget items are eligible costs under this program, and each is justified via the budget narrative as reasonably necessary to the success of the project.</li> <li>• Budget requests are financially realistic, and each is supported by an estimate, quote or bid.</li> <li>• How each budget item will be used, when, and for what, is provided.</li> </ul>

## AWARD CONSIDERATIONS

**General:** Subrecipients will be expected to complete basic grant administration including invoicing, reporting, and project evaluation. All awardees must attend a mandatory, virtual orientation.

**Contracts:** A contract will be developed by DATCP for each funded project. No funding commitment is final until the contract is signed and executed. Grant contracts must be signed and returned to DATCP within 30 days of receipt. Failure to submit an executed copy of the contract within 30 days of receipt may result in the loss of awarded grant funds unless the delay is approved by DATCP.

**Grant Payments:** This is a reimbursement grant, meaning that subrecipients will have to pay for project costs themselves and then seek reimbursement for them from DATCP. DATCP will accept requests for reimbursements on a rolling basis. Subrecipient shall seek payments only for expenses incurred during the performance period. All requests for reimbursement will be on the Reimbursement Request Form and include an itemized invoice and documentation of the expenses for which payment is requested. The Department will withhold a final payment of 25% of the total grant award pending Department receipt and approval of the final reimbursement request, subrecipient performance reporting, and a request to receive the remaining balance.

**Pre-Award Costs:** If an applicant selected to move on to the USDA review wishes to incur costs within the period of performance of their project but before a fully executed contract is realized, the applicant may petition DATCP to purchase requested items through a formal Pre-Award Letter. Once the Letter is approved and signed by all necessary parties, the applicant would be permitted to purchase the item(s) listed before a contract is fully executed. However, the applicant would not be able to claim reimbursement until a fully executed contract for their project is realized. Costs incurred for item(s) listed in the fully executed Pre-Award Letter that are later removed from a project during the USDA review process, are not obligated to be reimbursed by DATCP.

**Reporting Requirements:** To ensure attainment of program goals and monitor progress, subrecipients will be required to complete progress reports using report templates provided by DATCP. Subrecipient may have payments withheld or be required to return previously disbursed funds to DATCP if it fails to submit timely reports or submits incomplete reports.

**Monitoring:** DATCP RFSI program staff will support, monitor, and evaluate each funded project. Site visits may be conducted. DATCP reserves the right to audit the applicant relating to the performance of the project during and up to four years after completion of the contract.

**Insurance Coverage:** Subrecipients must provide insurance coverage sufficient to safeguard equipment acquired with funds received under an RFSI agreement as provided in 2 CFR § 200.310.

**Record Requirements:** The subrecipient will be responsible for setting up and maintaining a project file that contains all records of correspondence with DATCP, receipts, invoices, and copies of all reports and documents associated with the project. The subrecipient shall retain all data and other records relating to the acquisition and performance of the Grant Award Agreement for a period of three years after the completion of the contract. Records for equipment acquired with the support of Federal funds must be retained for three years after final disposition. All records shall be subject to inspection and audit by state personnel at reasonable times. Upon request, the subrecipient shall produce a legible copy of any or all such records.

**Audits:** State and local governments, Indian tribes, institutions of higher learning, or nonprofit organizations who receive federal awards from all sources, including this grant, of \$750,000 or more during their fiscal year must comply with the audit requirements of 2 C.F.R. § 200, Subpart F.

**Open Records:** Applications submitted for funding and all related contracts and reports are subject to disclosure under Wisconsin's Public Records Law. If the grant applicant or subrecipient requests any information submitted to DATCP be deemed a trade secret, the document should be labeled using "trade secret" and the requested status should be noted when the document is submitted. DATCP will notify the grant recipient if a public records request is made for the information claimed to be trade secret by the grant recipient. Such information may be kept confidential by DATCP only as authorized by law. See Wis. Stat. § 19.36(5).

**Other Considerations:** RFSI application materials are authorized by Wis. Stat. §93.07(2). Completing these materials is required to apply for the RFSI Equipment-Only Grant. All applications submitted in response to this RFP become the property of DATCP. Personally identifiable information requested on these materials may be used for purposes other than which it is originally being collected. See Wis. Stat. § 15.04(1)(m). The agency reserves a royalty-free, nonexclusive, and irrevocable license to reproduce, publish, otherwise use, and to authorize others to use materials produced under this grant agreement. DATCP reserves the right to do the following:

- Post funded applications to the DATCP website.
- Reject any or all applications received.
- Waive or modify minor irregularities in applications received after prior notification and agreement of applicant.
- Use any or all ideas submitted unless those ideas are covered by legal patent or proprietary rights.
- Amend program specifications after their release, with appropriate written notice to potential applicants.
- Require a good-faith effort on the part of the subrecipient to work with DATCP after project completion to develop or implement project results in Wisconsin, including a follow-up survey to determine long-term project impacts.
- Withhold or recoup any payments when contract conditions are not met or if the recipient submits false or misleading information to the department.
- Modify reporting requirements during the project.
- Share program report data and success stories on DATCP websites and social media channels.