



HPAI Poultry Innovation Grand Challenge Fiscal Year 2025 Cooperative/Interagency Agreements

Fiscal Year 2025 Notice of Funding Opportunity

Funding Opportunity Number: USDA-APHIS-10025-VSSP0000-25-0015

Publication Date: March 20, 2025

Application Due Date: May 19, 2025, 11:59 PM Eastern Daylight Time

TABLE OF CONTENTS

(1) BASIC INFORMATION	1
EXECUTIVE SUMMARY	1
(2) Eligibility	2
ELIGIBLE APPLICANTS.....	2
THRESHOLD ELIGIBILITY CRITERIA	2
COST SHARING	3
FUNDING RESTRICTIONS.....	3
(3) PROGRAM DESCRIPTION	3
COST GUIDANCE	4
LEGISLATIVE AUTHORITY	4
(4) Application CONTENTS AND FORMAT	4
OBTAINING AN APPLICATION PACKAGE.....	4
CONTENT AND FORM OF THE APPLICATION PACKAGE.....	4
(5) SUBMISSION REQUIREMENTS AND DEADLINES	5
UNIQUE ENTITY IDENTIFIER AND SYSTEM FOR AWARD MANAGEMENT (SAM).....	6
OTHER SUBMISSION REQUIREMENTS	6
(6) Application Review Information	6
EVALUATION CRITERIA.....	7
SELECTION AND REVIEW PROCESS.....	7
(7) AWARD NOTICES	8
AWARD NOTICES.....	8
(8) POST-AWARD REQUIREMENTS AND ADMINISTRATION	9
ADMINISTRATIVE AND NATIONAL POLICY REQUIREMENTS	9
REPORTING	9
PROJECT EVALUATION	9
OTHER INFORMATION	9
APPENDIX 1. FUNDING PRIORITY TOPICS	10
APPENDIX 2. New Applicant Information	12
APPENDIX 3. Tips For Applicants	13

(1) BASIC INFORMATION

Federal Agency Name: United States Department of Agriculture (USDA), Animal and Plant Health Inspection Service (APHIS)

Funding Opportunity Title: HPAI Poultry Innovation Grand Challenge Fiscal Year (FY) 2025

Announcement Type: Initial Announcement

Catalog of Federal Domestic Assistance Number: 10.025

Funding Details: This funding opportunity supports USDA's new comprehensive strategy to curb highly pathogenic avian influenza (HPAI), protect the U.S. poultry industry, and lower egg prices as described in the U.S. Secretary of Agriculture's February 26, 2025, press release, [USDA Invests Up To \\$1 Billion to Combat Avian Flu and Reduce Egg Prices](#). Through this grand challenge, APHIS will provide funds to support high-value and high-impact projects that will explore vaccines, therapeutics, research and other strategies to combat highly pathogenic avian influenza (HPAI) in poultry. Additional details about the program and this funding opportunity, including additional information for applicants, are available on the USDA APHIS [HPAI Poultry Innovation Grand Challenge](#) website.

APHIS will make available up to \$100 million in funds to support the HPAI Poultry Innovation Grand Challenge. In this competitive funding opportunity, the HPAI Poultry Innovation Grand Challenge is seeking proposals for projects that address the funding priority topics described in the Executive Summary below or in more detail in Appendix 1, and funds will be awarded to eligible entities described in Section 2.

Key Dates: Applications must be received through [ezFedGrants](#) (eFG) for non-federal applicants or via email to SM.AP.HPAI.Challenge@usda.gov for federal applicants by May 19, 2025, 11:59 PM Eastern Daylight Savings Time. Applications received after this deadline will not be considered for funding.

Anticipated Awards: APHIS anticipates that most agreements awarded will not exceed \$2,000,000. Proposals exceeding \$2,000,000 will be considered.

Anticipated Award Start Date: APHIS anticipates that work covered under these agreements will start no sooner than August 1, 2025, and end no later than 3 years after the start date, but flexibility may be allowed to accommodate specific project needs.

Period of Performance: Projects should be completed within 3 years. The scope of the proposed project should determine the period of performance. Funding will not be allowed, nor activities approved to occur, either before or after the designated period of performance. A pre-award must be established if activities need to occur before the period of performance.

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

APHIS is making up to \$100,000,000 available in FY 2025 to support high-value and high-impact projects that explore vaccines, therapeutics, research, and other strategies to combat avian influenza, lower egg prices, and protect the U.S. poultry industry. Eligible applicants are invited to submit proposals that align with and support the priority topics listed below by the deadline on May 19, 2025, 11:59 EDT. Priority topics include:

- Topic 1. Develop novel vaccines to protect poultry from highly pathogenic avian influenza (HPAI) that are safe, potent, and efficacious across multiple avian species and against current circulating clades.
- Topic 2. Develop novel therapeutics to address HPAI in poultry, including preventing, controlling, or eliminating HPAI virus, characterizing genomic targets for disease resistance, and supporting poultry health.
- Topic 3. Conduct research to further understand avian influenza in poultry and to improve response strategies.

Additional details about the priority topics can be found in Appendix 1.

For questions about the HPAI Poultry Innovation Grand Challenge program and about this funding opportunity, required documents, or the ezFedGrants application process, please refer to the detailed information provided on the [HPAI Poultry Innovation Grand Challenge](#) website or contact SM.AP.HPAI.Challenge@usda.gov.

(2) ELIGIBILITY

ELIGIBLE APPLICANTS

HPAI Poultry Innovation Grand Challenge eligible applicants are:

1. For-profit organizations, non-domestic (non-U.S.) entities (foreign organizations) and non-domestic (non-U.S.) components of U.S. organizations will require additional review and approval processes
2. Colleges and universities, including university research foundations
3. State, national, allied, or regional producer organizations with direct or significant economic interest in poultry production
4. State, national, allied, or regional veterinary organizations or specialty boards recognized by the [American Veterinary Medical Association](#)
5. Federal agencies
6. Nonprofits with 501(c)(3) IRS status, other than Institutions of Higher Ed
7. Nonprofits without 501(c)(3) IRS status, other than Institutions of Higher Ed
8. State departments of agriculture
9. State emergency agencies
10. Small businesses

Applicants can submit as many proposals as they wish. If you want to submit proposals for more than one project, submit each proposal in a separate application package. This makes it easier for reviewers to score and rank proposals and improves the likelihood of funding.

THRESHOLD ELIGIBILITY CRITERIA

Application packages must meet these initial screening criteria to be considered for further review. Proposals that do not meet these initial screening criteria will not be considered.

1. Proposals must be submitted by eligible entities.

2. Proposals must address the funding priorities listed in Section 1 and described in detail in Appendix 1.
3. All required documents and forms listed in Section 4 must (a) be included in the application package, and (b) comply with the submission instructions described in Section 5 of this announcement. Any application package with missing or incomplete documents or forms will not be considered for review.
4. Proposals, including all associated documents and forms, must be received on or before the proposal submission deadline. Proposals received after the submission deadline will not be considered.

COST SHARING

Cost sharing, matching, or cost participation is not required for HPAI Poultry Innovation Grand Challenge projects. If an applicant includes contributions as part of a cost share in their budget proposal and it is accepted by APHIS, the commitment of funds becomes legally binding, must be reported on the SF-425, and is subject to audit. Additional information about cost sharing is available in the [Guidelines for Use of Funds](#) for the APHIS HPAI Poultry Innovation Grand Challenge Cooperative & Interagency Agreements.

FUNDING RESTRICTIONS

Funding restrictions, including unallowable costs, indirect cost cap, and cost restrictions, are provided in the [Guidelines for Use of Funds](#) for the APHIS HPAI Poultry Innovation Grand Challenge Cooperative & Interagency Agreements and described in [2 CFR Subpart E](#), Cost Principles – General Provisions for Selected Items of Cost.

(3) PROGRAM DESCRIPTION

This funding opportunity supports USDA’s new comprehensive strategy to curb highly pathogenic avian influenza, protect the U.S. poultry industry, and lower egg prices as described in the U.S. Secretary of Agriculture’s February 26, 2025, press release, [USDA Invests Up To \\$1 Billion to Combat Avian Flu and Reduce Egg Prices](#).

Funding Priorities: APHIS will make available up to \$100,000,000 in funds to support projects that address the funding priorities described in Appendix 1. There is no commitment by USDA to fund any application or to make any Federal award as a result of this announcement.

Type of Assistance Instrument: Awards will be funded via cooperative agreements; interagency agreements will be used if the recipient is a federal agency. Cooperative agreements may include substantial involvement by APHIS to assist in the completion of the goals and objectives of the work.

Competitive Process: Funds will be awarded to the highest quality proposals through a merit-based competitive review and award process. The proposal review process is described in Section 6. The number of awards is contingent on the submission of a sufficient number of meritorious applications. Final funding decisions are at the discretion of USDA.

Based on reviewer recommendations, APHIS may award less than the requested amount of funds for a project. In these cases, applicants may accept or decline the award that is offered. If applicants accept a reduced funding level, applicants will submit a revised application that addresses reviewer concerns and aligns with the award amount. APHIS will provide additional guidance to applicants in these situations.

COST GUIDANCE

All APHIS awards are subject to the terms and conditions, cost principles, allowable and unallowable costs, direct and indirect costs, cost share and matching, and other considerations as described and defined in:

- [Guidelines for Use of Funds](#) for the APHIS HPAI Poultry Innovation Grand Challenge Cooperative & Interagency Agreements. This document includes information on how to calculate indirect costs.
- [2 CFR Subpart E](#), Cost Principles – General Provisions for Selected Items of Cost.

All applicants must submit a detailed Financial Plan that adheres to the documents referenced above.

LEGISLATIVE AUTHORITY

The HPAI Poultry Innovation Grand Challenge is authorized under the Animal Health Protection Act (7 U.S.C. 8310 and 8316), 15 U.S.C. 714b (j), the Commodity Credit Corporation (CCC).

(4) APPLICATION CONTENTS AND FORMAT

Non-federal applicants must submit all application materials electronically using the [ezFedGrants](#) system. Federal Applicants should refer to Section 5 for application submission information.

We urge applicants to submit their application packages early and to complete the following activities as soon as possible: (1) Register and maintain an active System for Awards Management (SAM) account, (2) create a Login.gov Account, and (3) establish an ezFedGrants (eFG) account. Instructions are available in Appendix 2 and on APHIS' [How to Apply for APHIS Funding: Getting Started web page](#).

OBTAINING AN APPLICATION PACKAGE

Applicants can find all application materials on the [ezFedGrants](#) (eFG) website or the [Grants.gov](#) website by searching CFDA number 10.025 or Funding Opportunity Number USDA-APHIS-10025-VSSP0000-25-0015. Application materials and additional information is also available on the USDA APHIS [HPAI Poultry Innovation Grand Challenge](#) website.

CONTENT AND FORM OF THE APPLICATION PACKAGE

For **Non-Federal Applicants**, the application package must include the documents listed below. Note that application documents must be in PDF format before they can be uploaded in eFG. The total size of all PDF attachments cannot exceed 20mb.

- Project proposal WORK PLAN. *See below.*
- Project proposal FINANCIAL PLAN. *See below.*
- SF-424, "Application for Federal Assistance". Applicant completes this in ezFedGrants.
- SF-424A, "Budget Information – Non-Construction Programs". Applicant completes this in ezFedGrants.

For **Federal Applicants**, the application package must include:

- Project proposal WORK PLAN. *See below.*
- Project proposal FINANCIAL PLAN. *See below.*

Applicants should refer to Appendix 2 when preparing a proposal package for submission. Any proposal with missing or significantly incomplete documents or forms will result in a rejected application.

Project Proposal Work Plan

Applicants must submit a project proposal Work Plan that provides details on all aspects of the project. The HPAI Poultry Innovation Grand Challenge Work Plan template is available on the [APHIS HPAI Poultry Innovation Grand Challenge](#) website. Applicants are strongly encouraged to use the HPAI Poultry Innovation Grand Challenge Work Plan Template. Applicants who do not use the template must include all the information requested in the template in their Work Plan. Work Plans should not exceed 25 pages and must be submitted in PDF format. Refer to Appendix 3 for more information about the Work Plan.

Project Proposal Financial Plan

Applicants must submit a project proposal Financial Plan that includes details about the project budget. When preparing a Financial Plan, applicants must comply with the guidance and funding restrictions described in Section 2. The HPAI Poultry Innovation Grand Challenge Project Financial Plan Template is available on the [APHIS HPAI Poultry Innovation Grand Challenge](#) website. Applicants are strongly encouraged to use this template. Applicants who do not use the template must include all information requested in the template in their Financial Plan. Financial Plans must be submitted in PDF format. Information in the Financial Plan must match the funding and budget information in the SF-424, SF-424A, and Work Plan. Refer to Appendix 2 for more information about the Financial Plan.

(5) SUBMISSION REQUIREMENTS AND DEADLINES

The closing date and time for receipt of proposal submissions is May 19, 2025, 11:59 PM Eastern Daylight Savings Time. Proposals received after the submission deadline will not be considered.

Non-Federal Applicants must submit all application materials electronically using [ezFedGrants](#). We urge applicants to submit their application early.

- **To submit an application in ezFedGrants, applicants must have a Login.gov Account and an ezFedGrants Account.** Applicants who do not already have these are encouraged to **create these accounts as soon as possible**. Additional instructions on these activities are available on the APHIS' [How to Apply for APHIS Funding: Getting Started](#) web page.
- eFG will not permit applicants to submit an application package after the deadline of May 19, 2025, 11:59 PM Eastern Daylight Savings Time. Late application packages cannot be accepted.
- Application packages from non-Federal entities must be submitted electronically through the [ezFedGrants system](#) only. No emailed or hard copy application packages will be accepted from non-Federal entities.
- Applicants who encounter problems with the eFG application process may contact SM.AP.HPAI.Challenge@usda.gov – at least 48 hours before the deadline – for additional assistance with submitting an application package.
- If applicable, States that are required to comply with Executive Order 12372, Intergovernmental Review of Federal Programs, will need to include a waiver or approval response letter from the State's Single Point of Contact (SPOC). Check the Intergovernmental Review (SPOC List) ([usda.gov](https://www.usda.gov)) for the most current list of required States for APHIS CFDA 10.025.

Federal Applicants must submit the required application materials via email to SM.AP.HPAI.Challenge@usda.gov by the deadline listed in this announcement. The electronic date and

time stamp from the email system will be used to determine whether federal applications are received before the deadline.

All applications must be complete and submitted by the deadline without exception.

UNIQUE ENTITY IDENTIFIER AND SYSTEM FOR AWARD MANAGEMENT (SAM)

System for Award Management (SAM)

All applicants (except Federal agencies) are required to register in the System for Award Management (SAM) prior to submitting an application and continue to maintain an active SAM registration with current information throughout the award period of performance (2 CFR §200.205). To register, go to the [SAM website](#). **When creating a SAM account, it may take up to two weeks before the account appears in federal systems.** Applicants should verify their SAM registration, and applicants who are not already registered in SAM are encouraged to complete this task as soon as possible.

Additional instructions for SAM registration are available in Appendix 2 and on APHIS' [How to Apply for APHIS Funding: Getting Started](#) web page.

OTHER SUBMISSION REQUIREMENTS

- Letters of support are not required but may be included in the application package. Letters of support from State Animal Health Officials or poultry production organizations may be helpful for some types of projects but are not required. If included, letters of support should be uploaded in PDF format as attachments in the ezFedGrants system.
- **Applicants should not request letters of support from APHIS employees;** the HPAI Poultry Innovation Grand Challenge will solicit input from APHIS experts during the review process.
- Curriculum vitae (CV's) are not required. Applicants should **briefly summarize** the relevant professional experience of the project leader(s) in the Work Plan instead of attaching CV's.
- Applicants must describe support needed from APHIS personnel to accomplish their project such as participation by APHIS personnel in events associated with the project (e.g., workshops, planning meetings) or services to be provided by APHIS subject matter experts (e.g., data, information, analyses) to complete the project.
- Applicants may not use resources provided by the USDA APHIS National Veterinary Stockpile to complete their projects.
- APHIS complies with Section 508 of the Rehabilitation Act of 1973.

(6) APPLICATION REVIEW INFORMATION

The USDA is responsible for selecting and approving HPAI Poultry Innovation Grand Challenge funded projects. This is a competitive funding opportunity. Applications that meet the threshold eligibility criteria in Section 2 will compete for available funds with all other eligible applications submitted in response to this funding opportunity announcement.

EVALUATION CRITERIA

Evaluation Criteria

Proposals will be evaluated based on the criteria listed below. Applicants should explicitly address these criteria in their project Work Plan. Proposals will be scored based on the relative importance of each listed criteria below in the order that they are listed. For example, project relevance will be weighted more than feasibility of success, feasibility of success will be weighted more than qualifications, and so on.

1. Project relevance:
 - a. Clear, strong and direct alignment with one or more of the priority topics (Appendix 1)
 - b. Innovative, novel and unique solutions that address one or more funding priorities (Appendix 1)
 - c. Project outcomes and deliverables are likely to have significant impact and value to American farmers, ranchers and producers
2. Feasibility of success including:
 - a. Practical plan of action
 - b. Technically sound approach
 - c. Clear objectives and deliverables, including clear information about what will be delivered in each year of the project
 - d. Reasonable timeline to complete activities
3. Qualifications:
 - a. Applicant (individual or team) has demonstrated skills and experience to conduct the proposed project
 - b. Adequacy of available or attainable personnel, facilities, equipment, and/or resources.
4. Cost effectiveness:
 - a. Proposal costs, including equipment, are considered reasonable and necessary to produce expected outcomes
 - b. Proposal leverages existing resources if available

SELECTION AND REVIEW PROCESS

Eligible proposals will be evaluated by a team of subject matter experts nominated by APHIS. To avoid potential conflicts of interest, reviewers may have no association with projects they are reviewing. In the event of a real or perceived conflict of interest, a reviewer shall recuse themselves as appropriate. The review team may seek counsel from additional subject-matter experts as appropriate. USDA will consider the review team's recommendations in making final funding determinations.

In addition to the evaluation criteria described above, reviewers and USDA may consider alignment with USDA policies and procedures, dispersion of projects across geographic areas, and critical aspects of the funding priorities described in Section 1 and in detail in Appendix 1.

During the application review process, APHIS will conduct a risk assessment for applicants. Applicants will be verified in the System for Award Management (SAM) to ensure they have not been disbarred or suspended, proposed for debarment, declared ineligible, or voluntarily excluded from covered transactions by any Federal department or agency. APHIS may not issue a federal award to an applicant until the applicant has complied with all applicable unique entity identifiers and SAM requirements. If an

applicant has not fully complied with the requirements, APHIS may determine that the applicant is not eligible to receive a federal award.

When anticipated total federal share exceeds the simplified acquisition threshold, APHIS is required to review and consider information about the applicant included in the designated integrity and performance system accessible through SAM. An applicant, if desired, may review and comment on any information about their organization previously entered and currently in the system. When completing the risk assessment, APHIS will consider applicant comments in addition to other information in the designated integrity and performance system to assess applicant's integrity, business ethics, and record of performance under federal awards.

(7) AWARD NOTICES

APHIS will administer the agreements and collaborate with project recipients to provide advice, receive and review project documents, offer comments and suggestions, track project performance, and communicate with recipients as necessary to ensure progress in accomplishing the project, identifying obstacles, and resolving concerns.

Recipients will track performance and expenditures, provide progress reports and project deliverables in accordance with the project Work Plan, and communicate with APHIS staff to assess and evaluate progress.

AWARD NOTICES

All applicants will be notified by email after project recommendations are approved by the Secretary of Agriculture and announced by USDA APHIS. Awards will be executed as quickly as possible after the awarded projects are announced. Pre-awards may be requested in circumstances where there is urgency to begin work before the award can be executed.

Applicants selected for funding will receive instruction on next steps to process a Notice of Award (NOA) via [ezFedGrants](#). The Notice of Award will provide pertinent instructions and information including but not limited to the information described in [2 CFR § 200.210](#) and a reference to the [APHIS General Terms and Conditions](#).

Non-Federal Applicants whose proposals are selected for funding will be required to submit the following forms:

- Certification Regarding Lobbying. Required if the Federal Assistance portion of the project's financial plan is greater than \$100,000.
- SF-LLL "Disclosure of Lobbying Activities". Required if the Federal Assistance portion of the project's financial plan is greater than \$100,000.
- A signed copy of the current Negotiated Indirect Cost Rate Agreement (NICRA). Required if indirect costs are assessed (2 CFR Part 200.414).

Federal Applicants selected for funding will receive further communication from APHIS regarding requirements and processes for Interagency Agreements.

(8) POST-AWARD REQUIREMENTS AND ADMINISTRATION

ADMINISTRATIVE AND NATIONAL POLICY REQUIREMENTS

Successful applicants must comply with the requirements contained in the [2 CFR Part 200](#) Uniform Administrative Requirements, Cost Principles, and Audit Requirements for Federal Awards. **Successful applicants also must comply with the [APHIS General Terms and Conditions](#), the approved project Work Plan, and the approved project Financial Plan.**

REPORTING

The Recipient's Project Coordinator shall provide quarterly program reports to the APHIS Project Manager through the [ezFedGrants](#) system and in compliance with the [APHIS General Terms and Conditions](#). Quarterly performance and financial reports are required and must be submitted in ezFedGrants. The reports will be used to verify compliance with provisions of the Cooperative Agreement.

PROJECT EVALUATION

The Recipient's performance will be evaluated through the review of quarterly performance and financial reports, as well as periodic discussions of project progress with the APHIS Program Manager. Performance is evaluated based on the following criteria to determine if the Recipient met the project standards included in the proposal Work and Financial Plans and if expected results and benefits were achieved:

1. Adherence to the project objectives.
2. Adherence to project schedule.
3. Adherence to project budget.
4. Delivery of results that meet the agreement performance standards and achieve stated outcomes.

OTHER INFORMATION

The USDA is not obligated to make any award as a result of this announcement nor to make any changes to future announcements. Only the APHIS Authorized Departmental Officer can bind the Government to an expenditure of funds and this obligation of funds shall only occur in writing by authorized officials and under the approved USDA, APHIS Cooperative Agreement format.

APPENDIX 1. FUNDING PRIORITY TOPICS

APHIS will consider project proposals that clearly and directly support one or more of the topics described below. Regardless of the priority topic, applicants are encouraged to submit proposals that:

Topic 1. Develop novel vaccines to protect poultry from highly pathogenic avian influenza (HPAI).

Priority will be given to projects that focus on vaccines that:

- Are well matched to the current circulating clades in the U.S. with the ability to quickly update.
- Are safe, potent, and efficacious across multiple avian species regardless of age.
- Can be administered to adult birds, at one day of age, or *in ovo* by low cost, mass application or automated methods.
- Stimulate both cell mediated and humoral immunity.
- Produce effective immunity in the presence of maternal antibodies.
- Maximize duration of immunity ideally up to sterilizing immunity.
- Compatible with the ability to differentiate vaccinated from infected animals (DIVA).
- Compatible with serologic testing schema.
- If successful, could be licensed by USDA CVB for use in the U.S.

Topic 2. Develop novel therapeutics to address HPAI in poultry.

Priority will be given to projects that:

- Support the development of interventions to prevent, control, or eliminate HPAI virus in poultry.
- Include novel non-vaccine therapeutic strategies to decrease the impact of HPAI on infected poultry flocks.
- May include research to characterize genomic targets for disease resistance to decrease the susceptibility of poultry to HPAI.
- Reduce viral load in infected poultry.
- Include oral anti-inflammatory and analgesic treatments for poultry.
- If successful, could be approved by FDA CVM or USDA CVB, as appropriate, for use in the U.S.

Topic 3. Conduct research to further understand avian influenza in poultry and to improve response strategies.

Priority will be given to projects that address gaps in understanding of:

- HPAI virus introduction and transmission routes, including but not limited to the role of ventilation systems in transmission.
- HPAI virus circulation on commercial poultry premises, including but not limited to within infected and/or vaccinated poultry flocks.
- HPAI virus persistence in the environment or wildlife in areas with high poultry density. Projects may address new technologies that support early detection in wild birds that disseminate the virus.

- Strategies to enhance flock-level immunity for HPAI, including but not limited to vaccines or vaccine regimens that will reduce or halt disease spread.
- Strategies or methods to improve virus elimination on impacted poultry premises.
- Innovative strategies to improve biosecurity on poultry premises. Projects may include developing, evaluating, and delivering products or applied training to help poultry producers develop, implement, and monitor enhanced biosecurity plans.
- Innovative solutions to improve response strategies or minimize depopulation of poultry.
- Novel or improved diagnostics to detect HPAI in poultry, including those that differentiate vaccinated from infected animals.

APPENDIX 2. NEW APPLICANT INFORMATION

Applicant organizations must complete and maintain the following registrations to be eligible to apply for or receive a HPAI Poultry Innovation Grand Challenge award. **These registrations must all be completed prior to the application being submitted. Registration in these systems may take 10 business days or more, so applicants should confirm that their registrations are current and/or begin these registration processes as soon as possible.**

Failure to complete registrations in advance of a due date is not a valid reason for a late submission. Take these steps before submitting your application in [ezFedGrants](#). This information is also available on APHIS' [How to Apply for APHIS Funding: Getting Started](#) web page.

1. **Register your organization with the U.S. Government System for Award Management (SAM).** You must be registered with SAM to apply for Federal funding, including all APHIS opportunities.
 - a. Don't wait! It takes at least 10 business days after you submit your registration for it to become active in SAM, plus at least 1 more day until it's available in other Government systems like ezFedGrants.
 - b. You can register in SAM at any time, even if you're not applying for funding right away.
2. **Create a Login.gov account.** This gives you secure access to USDA's online systems and services, including ezFedGrants.
 - a. *Note: The use of Login.gov is optional for existing [USDA eAuthentication](#) account holders. For more information, visit [Login.gov for Existing USDA Customers](#).*
3. **Establish an ezFedGrants (eFG) Account:** Applicants must have an active account in the USDA ezFedGrants system to submit their application for the HPAI Poultry Innovation Grand Challenge Funding. You'll need to have at least one Grants Administrative Officer (GAO) and one Signatory Official (SO) to set up your account. We recommend identifying these individuals as soon as possible and prior to submitting proposals to streamline your application process. For help using the [ezFedGrants](#) (eFG) system, contact the ezFedGrants help desk at ezFedGrants@cfo.usda.gov.

APPENDIX 3. TIPS FOR APPLICANTS

Best Practices

- Get started early. Do not wait until the day of the application deadline.
- Complete the following registrations **as soon as possible** to avoid delays in submitting your application to ezFedGrants: (1) Register and maintain an active System for Awards Management (SAMs) account, (2) create a Login.gov Account, and (3) establish an [ezFedGrants](#) (eFG) account. Instructions are available in Appendix 1 and on APHIS' [How to Apply for APHIS Funding: Getting Started](#) web page.
- Read and follow all application instructions in this NOFO.
- Applicants can submit as many proposals as they wish. If you want to submit proposals for more than one project, submit each proposal in a separate application package. This makes it easier for reviewers to score and rank proposals and improves the likelihood of funding.
- Make sure that every item in the Budget and Financial Plan is described with enough detailed information so that reviewers can verify that the cost is reasonable and justifiable.
- Check that the total funding requested and budget details in the Work Plan, Financial Plan, SF-424, and SF-424A are the same.

ezFedGrants Tips

- When uploading attachments in ezFedGrants, click the “Add Attachments” button.
- Only PDF attachments can be added in in ezFedGrants. The total size of all PDF attachments cannot exceed 20mb. PDF attachments cannot include comments or passwords, and PDF files names cannot include any special characters.

Work Plan Tips

- Use the Work Plan Template available on the APHIS [HPAI Poultry Innovation Grand Challenge](#) website.
- Submit the Work Plan in PDF format.
- Make sure all parts of the Work Plan template are completed.
- Check that the Work Plan does not exceed 25 pages.
- Write the Award Description last, and do not exceed the 350-word limit for the award description.
- Verify that the proposal directly and clearly supports one or more of the funding priority topics described in Section 1 and Appendix 1.
- Proposals that are organized, clearly written, and easy to follow will be well received by the review panel. Take time to think out the objectives, the deliverables to be produced from each objective, and the resulting impacts and outcomes. Logically describe the planned activities (methods) to achieve each objective. Project objectives should be measurable, lead to specific results, and be attainable and realistic. Provide sufficient detail for a reviewer to be convinced that you have thought out the process well and understand the resources needed to complete the proposed tasks.

- Make sure that project schedule described in the Work Plan aligns with the project start / end dates in the SF-424. APHIS anticipates that work covered under these agreements will start no sooner than August 1, 2025.
- Make sure the designated point of contact is correct. We will not be able to reach you if your contact information is incorrect.
- Check your proposal against the review criteria described in Section 6.

Financial Plan Tips

- Use the Financial Plan Template available on the [HPAI Poultry Innovation Grand Challenge](#) website.
- Submit the Financial Plan in Excel file format, not PDF.
- Make sure the Financial Plan total budget and total funding level aligns with the values in the SF-424, SF-424A, and the Work Plan.
- Clearly link items in the Financial Plan to the Work Plan objectives.
- Refer to the [Guidelines for Use of Funds](#) for calculating indirect costs accurately.
- If there are cost sharing/Recipient contributions, remember to list those values in the Financial Plan.
- Use only whole dollar amounts, no cents, for all entries into the Financial Plan.

SF-424 Tips

- Check the SF-424, Box 16 to ensure the congressional district for the Applicant and Project are listed.
- Make sure the proposed project Start and End dates (Box 17) are the same as in the Work Plan. APHIS anticipates that work covered under these agreements will start no sooner than August 1, 2025. Projects must be completed within 3 years.
- Make sure the total estimated federal funding (Box 18a) aligns with the total funding requested in the Work Plan, Financial Plan, and on the SF-424A (Line 5, column e).
- If your organization has a SPOC requirement, indicate the status on the SF-424, Box 19.
- Ensure that point of contact information is correct. The APHIS HPAI Poultry Innovation Grand Challenge team may not be able to reach you if your information is incorrect.

SF-424A Tips

- Make sure the total estimated federal funding (Line 5, column e) is the same as the total funding requested in the Work Plan, Financial Plan, and on the SF-424 (Box 18e).