**Section 1 – General Information**

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| --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- |
| **Solicitation Type:** | Request for Applications (RFA) | | | | |
| **RFA Number:** | AgTrade-GR-SR-RFA-001 | | | | |
| **Grant Purpose/ Title:** | RFA to Support Sector Associations and Green/Sustainable Solutions Organizations in Facilitation of Agro-Export to High-Value Markets | | | | |
| **Granting Party:** | CNFA  **For**: USAID  **Under**: The Agricultural Trade Diversification Program | | | | |
| **Release Date:** | **December 10, 2024** | | | | |
| **Point of Contact for Question:** | Name:  Title:  Address:  Email:  Telephone: | | Irine Salukvadze  Export Promotion Manager  47 Merab Kostava str., 0179 Tbilisi, Georgia  [Irine.salukvadze-IC@cnfageorgia.org](mailto:Irine.salukvadze-IC@cnfageorgia.org)  (+995 32) 2982207/13/14/18 | | |
| **Application Submission:** | Email: | | [aggrants@cnfageorgia.org](mailto:aggrants@cnfageorgia.org) | | |
| **Questions:** | **Question Deadline**: **December 27, 2024, 17:00** | | | | |
| **Instructions:** Questions must be submitted in writing; phone calls will not be accepted. Only CNFA’s written answers will be considered official and carry weight in the solicitation and subsequent evaluation. Verbal information received from CNFA, or any other entity should not be considered an official response to any questions. | | | | |
| **Application Workshop:** | **Workshop Date: December 18, 2024, 13:00-15:00; 47, Kostava str. room #22 (Business center)**  **Instructions:** Application workshop(s) allow interested applicants to ask questions and receive guidance on how to complete Attachment A, Grant Application, or other clarification. | | | | |
| **Application Submission:** | **Application Deadline: January 17, 2025, 17:00**  Applications received after the specified deadline will be considered late and will be considered only at the discretion of CNFA.  Applications will be accepted | | | | |
| **Via:** | Email | | Hard copy | Email or Hard copy |
| **Language:** Applications will be accepted in English. | | | | |
| **Instructions:** Applications will only be accepted in the format provided in this solicitation. Applicants are additionally instructed to:   * Include the RFA number in the email subject line. * Request confirmation of receipt to ensure the submission was received. | | | | |
| **Terms and Conditions:** | * Applicants understand by submitting a response to this RFA that submission does not constitute an award or commitment on the part of CNFA, the USAID Agricultural Trade Diversification Program, or USAID. * USAID is not party to this solicitation. Any and all communications regarding this solicitation will be conducted with CNFA, not USAID. * CNFA will not pay for costs incurred in the preparation and submission of an application. * CNFA reserves the right to accept or reject any or all applications received and/or issue amendments revising RFA terms before or after application receipt. * Applicants will be informed in writing of the decision made regarding their application. | | | | |
| **Language:** | Responses to this RFA will be accepted in English. | | | | |
| **Attachments:** | The following Attachments are included and hereby incorporated as part of this RFA:   * Attachment A – Grant Application | | | | |

**Section 2 – Program Description**

**2.1. Introduction:** The USAID Agricultural Trade Diversification Program is a five-year activity of USAID in Georgia and implemented by Cultivating New Frontiers in Agriculture (CNFA). CNFA is an international agricultural development organization that specializes in the design and implementation of sustainable, enterprise-based agricultural initiatives.

The primary objective of the USAID Agricultural Trade Diversification Program is to increase Georgian agricultural exports to high-value markets, reduce Georgia’s dependence on Russia for agricultural exports, and reduce the environmental footprint of the agriculture sector. The Program will achieve this by cultivating resilient, export-oriented market systems through an approach designed to strengthen linkages between a diverse range of agricultural sector stakeholders and by stimulating private sector investment to overcome barriers to growth and promote the adoption of innovative, climate-smart technologies. To improve the competitiveness of the Georgian agribusinesses, the Program plans to use different mechanisms to support export-oriented agricultural firms, business associations, and business service providers with the aim of building an agricultural economy that is both internationally competitive and resilient.

**2.2. Grant Program Purpose:** The Program’s Agro-Export Transformation Grant Fund aims to serve as a critical vehicle for targeting resources to the market systems actors and inflection points that have the most potential for sustainable, transformative change to facilitate the export of Georgia-grown and produced commodities to high-value markets as well as introduction of innovative, climate-smart technologies and practices into their operations.

**2.3. RFA** **Purpose:**

The USAID Agricultural Trade Diversification Program conducted an Export Market Assessment (EMA) to evaluate strategic target markets for diversification and identify agricultural products with the greatest potential for Georgian exports. This assessment analyzed 30 products, ultimately selecting nine based on demand scores and other criteria while grouping similar products to optimize market entry strategies. The final selection includes wines, lemonades, water, juices, nuts, fresh fruits, bay leaf, honey, and processed foods. The Program will concentrate its efforts on these nine products in five primary target markets: the original EU15 (which includes the UK), the United States, the Gulf Market, the EU New Member States (NMS), and other high-value export destinations for niche opportunities.

In today’s global market, agribusinesses seeking to export face many challenges, from complying with international regulations to meeting strict market standards. Business associations (BAs), both sector-specific and crosscutting, play a critical role in supporting agribusinesses to overcome these challenges and offer effective export support to their members. This RFA aims to support business associations, enabling them to better assist their members in entering new markets; facilitate business-to-business links; form international partnerships; ensure compliance of Georgian exporters with global standards; and adopt sustainable, green practices, ultimately driving the success of local export-oriented industries in the international marketplace.

For the purpose of this RFA and in line with the EMA, the Program seeks to support

* Local sector-specific BAs operating in the following industries:
* Fresh produce (with high export potential)
* Nuts (hazelnut, walnut, and almond)
* Food processing
* Laboratory services with a focus on agro-exporters
* Non- and for-profit organizations:
* Green practices and circular economy activities with a focus on agro-exporters

Illustrative activities eligible for funding under this RFA include but are not limited to:

|  |  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- | --- |
| Area | Illustrative Activities | Maximum Grant Amount | Leverage Requirement % |
| LOT 1 | | | |
| Sector-specific BAs operating in nuts, fresh produce, and food processing with export potential industries | The activities implemented within this grant may include but are not limited to the following:   * Organize and offer expert consulting services to members to increase their export competitiveness * Organize and conduct export readiness workshops; * Organize participation in international study tours, trade missions, and fairs to connect their members with potential buyers and partners; * Facilitate networking events and partnerships with foreign buyers, distributors, and other key stakeholders in export markets; * Arrange events at the industry level, including international conferences; * Regularly provide members with initial market briefs on target export markets, including demand trends, prices, international free trade agreements (when applicable), and regulatory requirements; * Facilitate partnerships with relevant international organizations, including business associations and research and development institutions, and otherwise promote Georgia as an agri-export destination. | **$150,000**  (50% of the total project costs) | 50% of the total project costs |
| LOT 2 | | | |
| Green/Sustainable Solutions Organizations | |  | | --- | | The activities implemented within this grant may include but are not limited to the following:   * Organize workshops, trainings, and roundtables to enhance technical knowledge and expertise of export-oriented agribusinesses on the practical application of sustainability and circular economy concepts; * Advise in piloting innovative technologies; * Elaborate strategy documents (action plans, guidelines, and roadmaps) for adoption of green technologies and practices, including but not limited to waste management strategies, used-water recycling, renewable energy sources for export-oriented individual agribusinesses and facilitate their implementation; * Organize and offer expert consulting services to agribusinesses operating in sectors/clusters with high export potential to facilitate the integration of circular economy and sustainability procedures in their operations; * Conduct awareness-raising campaigns for agribusinesses to introduce green practices into their operations, including local and international study tours agreed with the Program. | | **$100,000**  (50% of the total project costs) | 50% of the total project costs |
| LOT 3 | | | |
| BAs offering laboratory services through their member testing labs for agro-exporters | The activities implemented within this grant may include but are not limited to the following:   * Introduce the food safety Standard Operational Procedures required for target export markets by testing laboratories through trainings and international consultants; * Provide consultancy services to help exporters understand and comply with international regulations, standards, and market requirements; * Strengthen laboratory-customer relationships including increased visibility of lab services among agribusinesses; * Implement data management and reporting systems to improve efficiency and accuracy in test result handling and communication; to facilitate peer competence tests for quality assurance. | **$100,000**  (50% of the total project costs) | 50% of the total project costs |

The proposed activities should clearly demonstrate how they assist Georgian agribusinesses to increase their competitiveness and enter high value export destinations.

CNFA expects grants awarded under this RFA to meet the following parameters:

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| Maximum Estimated Value: | LOT 1: $150,000 per grant  LOT 2: $100,000 per grant  LOT 3: $100,000 per grant |
| Anticipated Period of Performance: | Maximum 24 months |
| Minimum Grantee Leverage: | 50% of the total cost of the project  in-kind leverage not to exceed 50% of the total leverage; the remaining 50% to be in cash |
| Target Geographic Location: | Georgia |
| Target Value Chains/Commodities: | Commodities with high-export potential: nuts (hazelnut, almond, walnut), fresh produce (berries, fruits, and vegetables); juices and other beverages; and processed food, including Georgian ethnic products |
| Target Recipients: | For LOT 1 and LOT 3- sector-specific and crosscutting business associations; for LOT 2 – non- or for-profit green/sustainable solutions organizations |

**2.4. Award Mechanism:** CNFA anticipates awarding fixed-amount-type grants to selected applicants. The award mechanism is defined as:

* **Fixed Amount Award:** Intended to reduce administrative burden and record-keeping requirements for the grantee, grant payments are based on completion of milestones (activities) that demonstrate performance for results. Goals and activities must be measurable, and there must be adequate cost, historical, or pricing data available to establish an award value. Real property cannot be purchased (i.e., land, land improvements, structures, and appurtenances thereto – excluding moveable machinery and equipment).

**Section 3 – Applicant Eligibility**

**3.1. Eligibility Requirements:** To be considered eligible for grant receipt, applicants must meet the following eligibility criteria:

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| **Category** | **Requirement** |
| Administrative | * Submit an application, with all supporting annexes, in the format required in Section 1 * Be one of the following types of entities: Sector-specific business association operating in the target sectors; for LOT 2 – non- or for-profit organization offering consulting services to introduce and maintain green practices and circular economy activities * Be legally registered in Georgia * Have, or be willing to obtain, a Unique Entity Identifier (UEI) |
| Programmatic | * Proposed activities are directly linked with the export facilitation to high-end markets * Propose objectives aligned with the project objective and grant program purpose * Share data related to the grant with CNFA * Comply with EPA’s (<https://www.epa.gov/compliance> ) as well as National environmental standards and requirements, including reduction of greenhouse gas emissions (when applicable) |
| Financial | * Meet the minimum leverage identified in Section 2.3 * Implement Georgian Accounting Standards * Be prepared to undertake an independent financial review or audit, as requested * Maintain business, financial, and technical records – either manually or electronically * Provide financial statements for the last three years (when applicable) |
| Compliance | * Adhere to high ethical business standards, including transparency in business dealings and record-keeping * Complete and pass a pre-award assessment, as applicable * Agree to and sign applicable certifications, including but not limited to the Certifications Regarding Lobbying; Terrorist Financing; Prohibition on Assistance to Drug Traffickers; etc. * Agree to the terms and conditions of required US Government Regulations, such as 2 CFR 200, Standard and Required as Applicable Provisions for Non-US NGOs, and others as applicable * Certify the applicant and its principals are not debarred, suspended, or proposed for exclusion from receipt of USG funds * Agree to provide data on the PMP indicators related to the grant implementation in the requested format on a biannual basis within the life of the Agricultural trade Diversification Program (March 2029) * Agree to take part in the survey(s) in-person or online that the Program will conduct during its lifetime |

**3.2. Ineligible Applicants:** The following entities are ineligible for grant funds:

* Government ministry or another public agency, including state educational and research institutions
* Entities with a conflict of interest or appearance of conflict of interest with CNFA, the USAID Agricultural Trade Diversification Program, USAID, or CNFA’s implementing partners
* Entities with key staff who are direct relatives (spouse, child, parent, sibling) of CNFA, the USAID Agricultural Trade Diversification Program, USAID, or CNFA’s implementing partners
* Entities or members that appear on the US Department of Treasury Office of Foreign Assets Control (OFAC) Specially Designated Nationals (SDN) and Blocked Persons list, the UN Security Council consolidated list, or in the System for Award Management (SAM) database
* Entities or members engaged in any activities related to Trafficking in Persons
* Entities or members engaged, transacting with, or providing resources to individuals or organizations associated with terrorism
* Entities which have been debarred, suspended, or otherwise considered ineligible for an award by the US Government

**3.3. Unallowable Costs:** Applicants may not use grant funds for any of the following:

* Private ceremonies, parties, celebrations, or “representation” expenses
* Purchases or activities deemed unnecessary to accomplish grant purposes, including any applicant headquarters’ expenses that are not directly linked to the implementation of the proposed project
* Previous obligations and/or bad debts
* Fines and/or penalties
* Creation of endowments
* Indirect costs – such as overhead or indirect fringe – unless the applicant has documented proof of such rates through audits, USG-issued NICRA, or is claiming the de minimis rate[[1]](#footnote-2)
* Any other costs unallowable per the applicable Cost Principles[[2]](#footnote-3)
* While not unallowable, applicants are discouraged from including restricted goods in their application(s) unless they are critical to the accomplishment of grant objectives, which include agricultural commodities, motor vehicles, pharmaceuticals, pesticides, used equipment, or fertilizers. Purchase of these goods requires additional approvals from USAID before they may be procured.
* Ineligible goods, including military equipment; surveillance equipment; police or law enforcement equipment; abortion equipment and services; weather modification equipment; luxury goods; and gambling equipment.
* Construction, defined as construction, alteration, or repair (including dredging and excavation) of buildings, structures, or other real property, including – without limitation – improvements, renovation, alteration, and refurbishment[[3]](#footnote-4). Construction includes, without limitation, roads, power plants, buildings, bridges, water treatment facilities, and vertical structures. It does not include emplacement and removal of prefabricated structures and humanitarian structures designed and constructed to be readily moved, erected, disassembled, stored, and reused (i.e. relocatable building) unless the emplacement and removal requires site preparation work that meets the definition of construction.

**Section 4 – Application Evaluation**

**4.1. Evaluation Criteria:** All applications submitted in response to this solicitation will be evaluated in accordance with the following criteria:

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| **Criteria** | **Description** | **Points** |
| Expected Impact | The proposal should clearly articulate how the activities/services will lead to measurable benefits for agribusinesses, including the potential increase in the number of businesses entering new export markets, growth in export sales, and improvement in market competitiveness. It is also crucial to demonstrate how it is planned to ensure the long-term sustainability of the developed services and their impact on agribusinesses. | 30 |
| Programmatic Design | This criterion examines the logic and coherence of the proposed activities, including the methodologies, timeline, and planned resources. The design should demonstrate a clear understanding of the needs of agribusinesses and outline a strategic approach to addressing those needs effectively. *The proposed grant activity is expected to advance gender awareness or integration.* | 20 |
| Expertise and Qualifications | The qualifications and expertise of the BA and the organization’s team shall be evaluated, focusing on their experience in export development, agribusiness, and related areas. This criterion looks at the skills, knowledge, and experience of key personnel and how these contribute to the ability to deliver the proposed services effectively. It is encouraged to include international consultants who will support the relevant business association in the implementation of planned activities to increase competitiveness of the industry/commodity and facilitate market entry at the prioritized export destinations. | 20 |
| Past Performance | The BA and organization’s history of performance in similar projects or assignments shall be assessed. This includes evaluating past successes, challenges faced, and lessons learned. | 10 |
| Financial Management and Budget Justification | The BA and organization’s financial management capacity and the justification for the proposed budget shall be examined. This involves assessing whether the business association has a sound financial management system in place, how funds will be allocated, and if the budget is reasonable and aligned with the proposed activities as well as the ability to fund its own portion of co-financing. Additional documentation/price reasonability to justify the proposed resources are encouraged and will serve as a positive criterion during the evaluation. A higher share of the leverage will be a positive criterion during the evaluation of the proposal. Applicant’s experience in managing similar size budgets will be also taken into consideration. | 20 |
| **Total** | | **100** |

**4.2. Evaluation and Pre-Selection:**

Members of the USAID Agricultural Trade Diversification Program’s Grant Selection Committee will evaluate applications in accordance with the above selection criteria. Applicants will be notified in writing whether their application was considered acceptable or not.

If the application is considered acceptable for pre-selection, CNFA will contact the applicant to engage in further discussions. A decision to engage in a more in-depth and specific discussion following initial selection is **not** a commitment to funding; it is simply a decision to move forward in the collaborative and joint effort to develop an impactful grant project.

* If discussions do not – in the USAID Agricultural Trade Diversification Program’s sole opinion – result in the development of a grant activity worthy of further pursuit, CNFA will inform the applicant that it is no longer interested in advancing the grant application.
* If the discussions result in a promising design and concept, CNFA will inform the applicant of that determination.Pre-selected applicants will be required to complete additional due diligence checks, which may include but are not limited to:
  + **Pre-Award Assessment**: to assess the operational, administrative, financial, and governance structures of the applicant
  + **Vetting**: to ensure the applicant and its principals are not excluded from receipt of funding

If due diligence uncovers no major issues, CNFA will provide the necessary instructions, technical requirements, and next steps of grant award.

**Section 5 – Authority and Governing Regulations**

Any grant awards by the USAID Agricultural Trade Diversification Program under this Solicitation are made under the authority of the US Foreign Affairs Act and USAID’s Automated Directive System (ADS) Chapter 303, “Grants and Cooperative Agreements to Non-Governmental Organizations.” Grants administered by CNFA will adhere to the terms of the applicable USAID Standard and Required as Applicable Provisions, as well as the USAID Agricultural Trade Diversification Program ‘s grants procedures. The USAID Agricultural Trade Diversification Program is required to ensure that all applicants receiving USAID grant funds comply with the requirements found in these regulations, as applicable to the respective terms and conditions of individual grant awards.

Applicants are made aware that USAID retains the right, at all times, to terminate, in whole or in part, the USAID Agricultural Trade Diversification Program’s grant-making authorities or any grants in progress.

**ATTACHMENT A – GRANT APPLICATION FORM**

**General Information**

Submission of this grant application is FREE OF CHARGE. Applicants are solely responsible for submitting applications. The USAID Agricultural Trade Diversification Program will not reimburse expenses associated with the preparation and submission of application materials. CNFA and USAID reserve the right to decline any application received. Incomplete applications will not be considered for evaluation.

**PART 1 – APPLICANT CERTIFICATION**

*The following letter must be placed on letterhead and completed/signed/stamped by a representative authorized to sign on behalf of the applicant:*

To: The USAID Agricultural Trade Diversification Program,

47 Merab Kostava str., 0179 Tbilisi, Georgia

Reference: AgTrade-GR-SR-RFA-001

To Whom It May Concern:

We, the undersigned, hereby provide the attached application to perform all work required to complete the activities and requirements as described in the above-referenced RFA. Please find our application attached.

We hereby acknowledge and agree to all terms, conditions, special provisions, and instructions included in the above-referenced RFA. We further certify that the below-named firm—as well as the firm’s principal officers, and all commodities and services offered in response to this RFA —are eligible to participate in this procurement under the terms of this solicitation and under USAID’s regulations.

Furthermore, we hereby certify that, to the best of our knowledge and belief:

* We have no close, familial, or financial relationships with any USAID, CNFA, CNFA implementing partners, or the USAID Agricultural Trade Diversification Program’s staff members;
* We have no close, familial, or financial relationships with any other applicants submitting proposals in response to the above-referenced RFA;
* The prices in our offer have been arrived at independently, without any consultation, communication, or agreement with any other applicant or competitor for the purpose of restricting competition;
* All information in our application and all supporting documentation is authentic and accurate;
* We understand and agree to CNFA’s prohibitions against fraud, bribery, and kickbacks;
* We understand and agree to CNFA’s prohibitions against funding or associating with individuals or organizations engaged in terrorism or trafficking in persons activities.

We hereby certify that the enclosed representations, certifications, and other statements are accurate, current, and complete:

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| --- | --- |
| Signature: |  |
| Name and Title of Signatory: |  |
| Date: |  |
| Company Registration or Taxpayer ID Number: |  |

**PART 2 – GRANT APPLICATION**

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| --- | --- |
| Date of Submission: |  |
| **Basic Information** | |
| Name of Organization: |  |
| Company’s Legal Status: | Business Association and Non- and For-profit Organization ( for LOT2) |
| TAX ID Number: |  |
| UEI Number (if available): |  |
| Date of registration: |  |
| Partners/Founders: |  |
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|  |
| Tel: |  |
| Address: |  |
| Grant Requested: | |
| Grant Amount (USD): |  |
| Grantee Leverage Amount (USD): | Cash: In-kind: |

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| --- | --- | --- | --- | --- |
| **Contact Person** | **Position** | **Address** | **Telephone** | **E-Mail** |
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|  |  |  |  |  |

1. **Organizational History:**

a. Provide a brief overview of your organization’s mission, values, and purpose.

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| *Write response here* |

b. Provide a brief description of your organization’s impact, history of operations, and years of experience related to the proposed activity.

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| --- |
| *Write response here* |

c. Provide information about the qualifications and professional backgrounds of your organization’s ownership and key staff members (bios). It is also requested to provide information about the international consultant(s) and clearly demonstrate their role and tasks to increase the export potential of the relevant agribusinesses. The proposed technical consultants (local and international) are subject to the Program’s approval.

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| --- |
| *Write response here* |

1. **Project Goal & Activities:**

  a. Describe in detail the goal of proposed project highlighting how it is linked to export facilitation.

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| *Write response here* |

b. Describe in detail planned tasks and activities for the proposed project including associated timeline. The proposed activities should be presented per area of the proposed assistance to agribusinesses and by years of the grant project.

|  |
| --- |
| *Write response here* |

c. Explain the expected impact the project, if supported, will have on the export-oriented Georgian agribusinesses. Set the measurable and quantifiable targets for each activity.

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| *Write response here* |

d. Explain how the project will be sustainable once the grant is completed.

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| *Write response here* |

e. Provide information on the similar projects implemented in the last three years, including a brief description, source of funding and contact persons, and achieved results/outcomes (if any).

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| *Write response here* |

1. **Budget:**

a. Please provide the project budget:

|  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- |
| **Budget Item** | **Grant Award Amount (USD)** | **Value of Grantee Leverage (USD)** |
|  |  |  |
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|  |  |  |
|  |  |  |
| **TOTAL** |  |  |
| *Grant vs. Grantee Leverage (%)* |  |  |

b. Specify the source of amounts intended for the grantee’s proposed leverage:

|  |  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- | --- |
|  | **Source** | **Amount (USD)** | **Description** |
| 1 | Business association and its members’ cash investment in the project; beneficiary companies’ cash investment in the project |  |  |
| 2 | Loan |  |  |
| 3 | In-kind contribution |  |  |
| 4 | Other |  |  |

c. Provide a budget narrative explaining the purpose of each proposed item of cost in section 3.a and how the price was determined. Any documentation justifying the price reasonability of proposed items is highly appreciated.

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| *Write response here* |

1. See [2 CFR 200.414(f)](https://www.ecfr.gov/current/title-2/subtitle-A/chapter-II/part-200/subpart-E/subject-group-ECFRd93f2a98b1f6455/section-200.414) [↑](#footnote-ref-2)
2. For non-profits, see [2 CFR 200 Subpart E](https://www.ecfr.gov/current/title-2/subtitle-A/chapter-II/part-200/subpart-E); for for-profits, see [FAR 31.2](https://www.acquisition.gov/far/subpart-31.2) [↑](#footnote-ref-3)
3. Improvements, renovation, alteration, and refurbishment includes any betterment or change to an existing property to allow its continued or more efficient use within its designed purpose (renovation), or for the use of a different purpose or function (alteration). Improvements include improvements to or upgrading of primary mechanical, electrical, or other building systems. It does not include non-structural, cosmetic work. [↑](#footnote-ref-4)