



1400 Independence Avenue, SW
Room 2055-S, STOP 0201
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TO: Dominic Mancini
Deputy Director
Office of Management and Budget

THROUGH: Levi S. Harrell
Departmental Clearance Officer
Office of the Chief Information Officer

FROM: Erin Morris
Associate Administrator

SUBJECT: Request for Emergency Review and Approval for a New Information Collection Request

We are requesting emergency review and approval of an information collection package for the U.S. Department of Agriculture (USDA), Agricultural Marketing Service (AMS) to administer a new block grant program, titled the Seafood Processors Pandemic Response and Safety (SPRS) Grant Program, authorized and funded under section 751 of the Consolidated Appropriations Act of 2021 (CAA) (Pub. L. No. 116-260) in response to the ongoing 2019 novel coronavirus (COVID-19) pandemic.

The agency cannot reasonably comply with the normal clearance procedures under the PRA due to the immediate need to provide financial assistance to domestic seafood processors impacted by COVID-19. SPRS is intended to provide Federal financial assistance to state entities in the form of block grants to fund seafood processing facilities and processing vessels for efforts to respond to coronavirus, including for measures to protect workers against COVID-19.

This program is a priority for the USDA and the Administration in the spirit of supporting the seafood industry by funding coronavirus response and prevention activities. The American seafood industry suffered a 20 percent drop in exports in the first 6 months of the COVID-19 pandemic. At the height of the pandemic, seafood catches dropped up to 40 percent across the U.S. These drops in the seafood economy were caused by staffing impacts caused by COVID-19 infection and outbreaks at processing facilities. Seafood processing facilities are high-density workplaces where it was difficult for workers to socially distance enough to prevent coronavirus outbreaks resulting in an entire industry that suffered. These facilities are also located in relatively remote area with limited healthcare capacity.

The impacts of the pandemic were felt differently across US seafood producing regions. This funding distribution formula will support the hardest hit seafood processing areas because it is designed to assist states with the highest landings data (formula developed by NOAA).

In early 2020, the governor of Alaska, issued a COVID-19 health mandate (HM10) to address health concerns related to the impending influx of workers amid the COVID-19 pandemic. This mandate required employers bringing critical infrastructure (essential) workers into Alaska to submit a Community Workforce Protective Plan. Part of this mandate outlined specific requirements for seafood processors, to reduce the risk for transmission of COVID-19, including testing and quarantine protocols. While this mandate resulted in improvements to the health impacts of seafood processors, it did result in increased costs for industry. The SPRS grant program is designed to relieve some of the expenses incurred.

The CAA directs the Secretary of Agriculture to make available \$1.5 billion beginning in fiscal year 2021, until expended. Of this \$1.5 billion, USDA is allocating \$50 million for this new Seafood Pandemic Response and Safety Grant Program. It directs the Secretary of Agriculture to provide “grants and loans to small or midsize food processors or distributors, seafood processing facilities and processing vessels, farmers markets, producers, or other organizations to respond to coronavirus, including for measures to protect workers against the Coronavirus Disease 2019 (COVID-19).” In accordance with the CAA, SPRS funds may be use for:

- Workplace safety measures, including, but not limited to, personal protective equipment, sanitizer, hand washing stations, air filters, thermometers, cleaning supplies, etc.
- Market pivots such as transition to virtual/online sales costs (online platform development and fees, online marketing, credit card processing fees), supplies, new signage.
- Retrofitting facilities for worker and consumer safety (plexiglass, walk up windows, heat lamps, fans, tents, propane, weights, tables, chairs).
- Additional transportation costs incurred to maintain social distancing.
- Additional worker housing costs incurred to maintain social distancing or to allow for quarantining of new or exposed employees.
- Unreimbursed costs associated with providing or enabling vaccinations, testing, or healthcare treatment of infected employees, including any paid leave.

Grants will be awarded to eligible state entities that work with the seafood processing sector. Each of the eligible states will then distribute award to support seafood processing facilities and processing vessels. AMS will allow reimbursement for costs incurred from the start of the Public Health Emergency Period (01/27/20) declared by the Secretary of Health and Human Services along with anticipated expenses for the remainder of 2021 to support seafood processors who experienced significant expenses over the course of the entire pandemic.

SPRS is voluntary and state respondents will apply for this specific block grant program. In doing so, they provide information, and AMS is the primary user of the information. The information collected is needed to certify that grant participants are complying with applicable program regulations in section 751 of the CAA and in accordance with the Office of Management and Budget’s (OMB) Guidance on Grants and Agreements (2 C.F.R. Part 200). The data collected is the minimum information necessary for AMS to effectively carry out the

program requirements and to provide the respondents the support they request to address the financial costs for their pandemic response efforts.

In compliance with OMB regulations (5 C.F.R. Part 1320) which implement the Paperwork Reduction Act of 1995 (Pub. L. 104-13), the information collection and recordkeeping requirements that may be imposed by this action are submitted to OMB for emergency review and approval. The additional reporting requirements would not become effective prior to OMB review. Once approved the collection will be merged with OMB No. 0581-0240, AMS Grant Programs.

Attached are the OMB 83-I, the Supporting Statement, and AMS-71 spreadsheet.