

# FY 2026 McGovern-Dole Application: Liberia

**Funding Opportunity:** USDA-FAS-10.608-0700-26-(669) Liberia **Applicant (fictional):** Atlantic Education and Nutrition Initiative (AENI) **Project name:** READY Liberia (Reading, Education, Agriculture, and Daily Yields) **Proposed federal award:** \$24,500,000 over 60 months (10/1/2026 to 9/30/2031)

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## Reader's note

This document contains:

1. **Compliance checklist** mapping every NOFO requirement to a draft section.
2. **Full draft of the Introduction and Strategic Analysis (ISA)**, the 12-page foundational section worth 20 points. Word counts are noted next to each subsection.
3. **Structured outlines with substantive content** for the remaining narrative sections (Plan of Operation, Org Capacity, M&E, Commodity Management, Budget). These are detailed enough to hand to section authors without re-briefing.
4. **Gap flags** identifying what AENI must verify, replace, or strengthen before submission.

A note on fictional content. Per project authorization, AENI and its sub-partners are invented placeholders. All country statistics, government policy details, prior project results, and partner institutions are real and sourced. Anywhere the draft would benefit from real data AENI has not yet shared, it is flagged inline with **[NEEDS REAL DATA]**.

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## Compliance checklist

NOFO requirement	Section / page limit	Status in this draft
Threshold: U.S. commodities integral to project	Throughout; affirmed in ISA Strategy	Drafted
Threshold: Multi-year assistance	60 months specified, cover page	Drafted
Threshold: SAM.gov active registration	N/A - administrative	Gap flag: AENI must confirm

<b>NOFO requirement</b>	<b>Section / page limit</b>	<b>Status in this draft</b>
Threshold: 501(c)(3) documentation	Attachment	Gap flag: AENI must attach
Threshold: SF-424 signed with UEI	Attachment	Gap flag
Threshold: SF-424A budget categorization	Attachment	Outlined
Threshold: Most recent NICRA	Attachment	Gap flag
Format: 12pt font, 1" margins, 8.5x11, single/double spaced, PDF, numbered pages	All sections	Will apply on layout
ISA - Summary (1 page)	4.2.a	Drafted
ISA - Country Overview and Context (6-7 pages suggested)	4.2.a	Drafted
ISA - Coordination and Opportunities (2 pages suggested)	4.2.a	Drafted
ISA - Strategy (2-3 pages suggested)	4.2.a	Drafted
ISA - Project Map (no page limit, attachment)	4.2.a	Specified
ISA - List of Acronyms (no page limit, attachment)	4.2.a	Provided
ISA - Total page limit: 12 pages including Summary + Main	4.2.a hard limit	Will require layout discipline
Plan of Operation - Activity Descriptions (15-16 pages suggested)	4.2.b	Outlined with 9 activities

<b>NOFO requirement</b>	<b>Section / page limit</b>	<b>Status in this draft</b>
Plan of Operation - Ration Justification (1-2 pages suggested)	4.2.b	Outlined with menu
Plan of Operation - Graduation Plan and Timeline (3 pages)	4.2.b	Outlined with timeline table
Plan of Operation total - 20 pages	4.2.b hard limit	Will require layout discipline
Organizational Capacity and Staffing (6 pages)	4.2.d	Outlined
Organizational Chart (1 page)	4.2.d	Specified
In-Country Registration (1 page)	4.2.d	Gap flag: needs AENI registration evidence
CVs for Project Lead and Subrecipient commitment letters (no page limit)	4.2.d	Gap flag: AENI must produce
M&E - Project-Level Results Framework (3 pages)	4.2.e	Outlined with linkages to MGD program-level RF
M&E - Performance Indicator Table (5 pages)	4.2.e	Outlined with standard + custom indicators
M&E - M&E Brief (3 pages)	4.2.e	Outlined
Commodity Management (7 pages)	4.2.f	Outlined
Budget Summary - 1 page using NOFO template	4.2.g, Appendix C	Drafted with line items
Budget Narrative - 25 pages	4.2.g	Outlined with cost categories per Appendix D
LRP at or below 10% of federal award	Budget + Strategy	Set at 9.8% (\$2.4M)

<b>NOFO requirement</b>	<b>Section / page limit</b>	<b>Status in this draft</b>
M&E budget at or above 3% of project operating	Budget	Set at 3.4%
GS-15 salary cap on personnel	Budget	Will apply
Voluntary cost share for bonus points ( $\geq 1\%$ of project operating budget)	6.2	Recommended at \$325K (~1.6%)
Country-specific guidance: target Grand Gedeh, River Gee, Rivercess, Grand Bassa OR justify deviation	Appendix B (Liberia)	Drafted: continuation + adjacent expansion in same four counties
Country-specific guidance: most schools transition to GoL by project end	Appendix B (Liberia)	Graduation plan targets 100% transition
Country-specific guidance: deepen WASH, school gardens, commodity security protocols	Appendix B (Liberia)	Addressed in Plan of Operation
America First framing	3 (Program Description), Strategy	Addressed in ISA Strategy
Risk management, fraud/waste/abuse	Throughout	Addressed in Strategy + Org Capacity
Required FAIS fields completed	4.2 + Appendix A	Administrative checklist

## Acronyms

AENI: Atlantic Education and Nutrition Initiative AIR: American Institutes for Research AOR: Agreement Officer's Representative CBO: Community-Based Organization CCC: Commodity Credit Corporation CSP: County School Plan EGRA: Early Grade Reading Assessment FAIS: Food Aid Information System FAS: Foreign Agricultural Service FFE: Food for Education GoL: Government of Liberia HGSE: Home-Grown School Feeding ITSH: Internal Transportation,

Storage, and Handling LB: Literacy Boost LISGIS: Liberia Institute of Statistics and Geo-Information Services LRP: Local and Regional Procurement MCN: Maternal and Child Nutrition MGD: McGovern-Dole MOE: Ministry of Education (Liberia) MOA: Ministry of Agriculture (Liberia) MOH: Ministry of Health (Liberia) M&E: Monitoring and Evaluation NICRA: Negotiated Indirect Cost Rate Agreement NSFP: National School Feeding Policy PTA: Parent-Teacher Association RF: Results Framework SBCC: Social and Behavior Change Communication SFD: School Feeding Division (Liberia MOE) SHN: School Health and Nutrition SMC: School Meals Coalition SO: Strategic Objective USDA: United States Department of Agriculture WASH: Water, Sanitation, and Hygiene

## 1. Introduction and Strategic Analysis

### 1.1 Summary (Page 1, ~480 words)

**Project name:** READY Liberia (Reading, Education, Agriculture, and Daily Yields) **Duration:** 60 months **Period of performance:** October 1, 2026 to September 30, 2031 **Proposed federal award:** \$24,500,000 (plus \$325,000 voluntary cost share) **Target region(s):** Grand Gedeh, River Gee, Rivercess, and Grand Bassa counties, Liberia **Targeted school-age children:** 78,400 students receiving daily meals **Direct beneficiaries (total):** approximately 142,000 **Targeted schools:** 312 public and community pre-primary and primary schools **U.S.-provided commodities:** 9,840 MT total, comprising fortified milled rice, yellow split peas, fortified vegetable oil **LRP commodities:** 1,180 MT total, comprising Power Gari (fortified cassava), local fonio, and dark leafy greens through cooperative procurement

READY Liberia will continue and deepen daily school meals delivery across the four southeastern counties that USDA has funded since 2018, while accelerating transition of school feeding responsibility to the Government of Liberia. AENI will reach 78,400 students with at least 170 days of fortified hot meals per school year, prepared on-site by trained cooks using U.S. commodities complemented by locally procured produce. By project end, AENI will have transferred operational responsibility for school feeding in 100% of READY schools to the Government of Liberia's expanding national program, supported by completed kitchen and WASH infrastructure in 312 schools, county-level coordination mechanisms in all four counties, and a costed handover plan jointly developed with the Ministry of Education.

**Table 1: Summary of estimated costs (USD)**

Cost Type	Subtotal (USD)
Administration	3,920,000

<b>Cost Type</b>	<b>Subtotal (USD)</b>
Activities	7,350,000
LRP Commodity and Food Purchases	2,400,000
Internal Transportation, Storage, and Handling (ITSH)	3,185,000
Total Indirect Costs	2,205,000
<b>Sub-total Project Operating Budget (excluding cost share)</b>	<b>19,060,000</b>
U.S. Commodity Cost	4,920,000
Freight Cost	520,000
<b>TOTAL PROGRAM VALUE (excluding cost share)</b>	<b>24,500,000</b>
Cost Share (voluntary)	325,000
Total subrecipient award value(s)	4,180,000
Total LRP Costs (commodity + ITSH allocable)	2,400,000

**Key deliverables and sustainability indicators:**

- 312 schools with completed kitchens meeting GoL infrastructure standards
- 312 schools with rehabilitated or newly constructed WASH facilities providing potable water and sex-segregated latrines
- 312 functioning school gardens managed by Parent-Teacher Associations
- Twelve farmer cooperatives supplying LRP commodities to project and beyond-project schools
- Increase in GoL school feeding budget allocation from \$7.5M (2026) to \$15M (2031), tracked annually
- 100% of READY schools transitioned to GoL operational responsibility by project end
- Digital commodity tracking system co-designed with MOE School Feeding Division, deployed across all 15 counties by Year 4

## 1.2 Country Overview and Context (Pages 2-8, ~3,000 words)

### School calendar and structure

Liberia's school year runs from early September to mid-July, covering 178 instructional days across two semesters with a December-January break. Pre-primary and primary schools operate Monday through Friday. The Ministry of Education has prioritized maximizing instructional time as part of its Education Sector Strategic Plan 2022/23-2026/27, which is the framework AENI will align all literacy interventions to ([UNESCO IICBA Country Brief](#)).

### Government of Liberia frameworks, policies, and commitments

The Government of Liberia is a member of the [School Meals Coalition](#) and has placed school feeding at the center of its education and human capital agenda. At the 2nd Global School Meals Coalition Summit in Fortaleza, Brazil, the Minister of Education committed publicly to four specific actions that READY Liberia is designed to support: expanding school feeding coverage to 332,000 children by 2029, revising the National School Feeding Policy by 2026, institutionalizing a permanent budget line for school feeding, and strengthening home-grown models that link farmers, school gardens, and clean cooking ([Liberia Ministry of Education, 2025](#)). Liberia reported reaching nearly 240,000 children across more than 1,300 schools in 13 of 15 counties in 2025, with parity between girls (116,000) and boys (122,000).

The national school feeding program's current budget allocation, \$7.5 million in 2026, marks a significant increase but remains far below the level required to sustain coverage if external partners withdraw. As of 2023, [WFP partnered with the Ministry of Education](#) on home-grown school feeding in Bong, Maryland, Montserrado, and Nimba counties, reaching 70,260 students in 289 schools, with 26% of the food (700 MT) procured locally including rice, gari, beans, and palm oil. Save the Children, the current USDA McGovern-Dole implementer, supports 234 schools across Grand Bassa, Grand Gedeh, Rivercess, and River Gee under the FY21 LEARN II award ([Save the Children Liberia](#)). The fragmentation of implementation models across counties is itself a sustainability risk that READY Liberia explicitly addresses by aligning protocols, commodity specifications, and reporting standards with the MOE School Feeding Division before handover.

Liberia's [Education Sector Strategic Plan](#) frames the country's commitment to education for all consistent with the Jomtien Declaration and Dakar Framework for Action. National dietary guidelines applicable to school meals are codified in the [Liberia Multi-Sectoral Nutrition Costed Strategic Plan 2024-2028](#), which AENI will use as the reference standard for ration composition.

### Education and literacy status

Liberia's literacy and education indicators remain among the lowest in West Africa. The [2021/2022 Annual School Census Report](#) recorded a primary school completion rate of

approximately 10% for boys and 11% for girls, with the Human Capital Index showing children complete an average of 4.2 years of schooling, equivalent to just 2.2 learning-adjusted years after accounting for assessment outcomes. [UNICEF reports](#) that 15 to 20% of children aged 6-14 are out of school, that only 54% of children complete primary education, and that 36% of primary teachers and 29% of secondary teachers are unqualified. Late entry into Grade 1 is endemic. Most ECE students are six or older when the policy target age is three to six, meaning many children begin Grade 1 between ages 8 and 10.

In the four target counties, conditions are worse than national averages. The civil war and the 2014 Ebola outbreak destroyed or damaged close to 60% of school buildings nationwide, with the rural southeast disproportionately affected because of road infrastructure gaps. AIR's [midterm evaluation of LEARN I](#) documented limited progress on literacy outcome means between 2018 baseline and 2021 midterm in Grand Bassa, Grand Gedeh, Rivercess, and River Gee. AIR attributed the constrained progress to COVID-19 school closures and rainy-season road conditions interrupting in-time commodity delivery. The endline evaluation (2022) reported gains in handwashing practices, school-related gender-based violence reporting, attendance, and food-security relief for households, but did not document statistically significant literacy gains versus comparison schools.

The implication for READY Liberia: improving daily attendance and concentration through reliable meals is necessary but not sufficient. AENI will pair school feeding with a specific, evidence-based literacy intervention package and direct teacher coaching to convert classroom time into learning gains. The Plan of Operation details this approach.

#### Food security, health, and nutrition status

Liberia ranks 120th of 127 countries on the [2024 Global Hunger Index](#), categorized as having a "serious" level of hunger. The Index found nearly two in every five Liberians are undernourished, a 5-percentage-point increase from 2016. [WFP estimates](#) that 81% of Liberia's population is food insecure and 93% cannot afford a healthy diet.

Child malnutrition data show progress and persistent gaps. The [Global Nutrition Report](#) puts stunting among children under five at 29.8%, slightly below the African regional average of 30.7%, and wasting at 3.4%, well below the regional average. Stunting has fallen from 45% in 2000 to 26.6% in current UN Nutrition estimates ([FAO, 2023](#)). Anemia among women of reproductive age affects 42.6% of women aged 15-49 with no measurable progress against the WHO target. In Maryland County, [WFP documents](#) chronic malnutrition rates of up to 25% among children under five, indicating that food insecurity intensifies in the southeast where READY Liberia operates.

Helminth infection rates in southeastern Liberia warrant continued deworming under McGovern-Dole guidance (deworming is required where helminth infection rates in the target area are 20% or higher and other actors are not implementing it). AENI will confirm baseline

rates through MOH partnership in Year 1 and continue deworming activities under the MOH's existing school-based protocol, coordinated through the County Health Officers.

### Girls' education and child safeguarding

Liberia has [progressed toward gender parity in primary attendance rates per UNESCO 2024 data](#), but parity narrows sharply at the upper-primary and secondary transition. Distance to school, household labor burden, menstruation-related absence in schools without functioning WASH, and school-related gender-based violence remain principal drivers of girls' dropout. The LEARN endline evaluation found that program schools showed improved awareness of and willingness to report school-related gender-based violence, demonstrating that intentional safeguarding interventions can shift community norms within five years. READY Liberia will continue and strengthen this work through a child safeguarding component embedded in every activity area.

### Coordination and the existing programming ecosystem

Multiple actors operate in Liberia's school feeding space: WFP (Bong, Maryland, Montserrado, Nimba); Save the Children's LEARN II project under McGovern-Dole (Grand Bassa, Grand Gedeh, Rivercess, River Gee); Mary's Meals; and various small NGO and faith-based feeding operations. The risk of duplication is real and USDA explicitly directs Applicants to avoid it. READY Liberia is designed to succeed and expand the LEARN II footprint in the same four counties rather than displace or parallel another donor's geography. AENI has documented coordination protocols proposed with WFP, Save the Children, MOE School Feeding Division, and County Education Officers in the Coordination section.

### Graduation and lasting impact precedents

Successful graduation in Liberia depends on three conditions that have not yet been met at scale: a coherent national policy framework (the NSFP is under revision in 2026, with READY Liberia positioned to inform it), reliable domestic financing (the \$7.5M 2026 budget allocation is insufficient for national coverage), and operational capacity at county and school levels (the LEARN II midterm showed that capacity gains require sustained, hands-on technical assistance rather than discrete training events). AENI's graduation strategy is built around addressing each condition explicitly. The detailed graduation plan and timeline appear in the Plan of Operation.

### Risks, gaps, and constraints

**Fraud, waste, and abuse risk.** Commodity diversion at port, warehouse, and school levels has been documented as a recurring vulnerability in Liberia operations. AENI will deploy a three-layer commodity tracking system (described in Commodity Management) combining barcoded movement logs, monthly school-level reconciliation, and quarterly third-party verification. Personnel ethics training will be mandatory annually with documented completion. A whistleblower hotline will operate from project Day 1.

**Risks to girls and child safeguarding.** Beyond SRGBV, READY Liberia identifies as material risks: kitchen safety (cooks are predominantly female and work with open flame), pregnancy-related dropout, and exposure during long walks to and from school. Mitigations are detailed in Plan of Operation activities on WASH, kitchen infrastructure, and parent engagement.

**Environmental vulnerabilities.** The four southeastern counties experience pronounced rainy seasons (typically May through October) that render road networks impassable for weeks at a time. This was the primary contributor to LEARN I commodity delivery delays. AENI's pre-positioning strategy, detailed in Commodity Management, holds 90 days of school-level rations at county warehouses ahead of each rainy season.

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### 1.3 Coordination and Opportunities (Pages 9-10, ~830 words)

READY Liberia operates within a coordination architecture with three layers: national, county, and school-community.

**At the national level,** AENI will participate in the MOE's School Feeding Technical Working Group, which is chaired by the Director of School Feeding and includes representatives from MOA, MOH, WFP, Save the Children, UNICEF, and FAO. The Working Group is the natural venue for harmonizing commodity specifications, ration standards, and digital reporting protocols across implementing partners. AENI will propose, in coordination with MOE and Save the Children, a single inter-partner ration baseline aligned to the Liberia Multi-Sectoral Nutrition Costed Strategic Plan, with documented variance procedures for context-specific adjustments. AENI will also coordinate with USDA/FAS leadership in Monrovia on quarterly project review.

The 2026 revision of the National School Feeding Policy presents a singular opportunity for READY Liberia. AENI will second a senior policy advisor on a part-time basis to the MOE School Feeding Division during Years 1 and 2 to support evidence generation, drafting, and stakeholder consultation for the revised policy. AENI's policy advisor role is fully costed in the budget and is explicitly designed to graduate to a permanent MOE position by Year 3.

**At the county level,** AENI will work through County Education Officers and County Agriculture Coordinators in all four target counties. AENI will support County School Feeding Committees comprising representatives from county education, health, agriculture, and finance offices, traditional and county authorities, PTA federations, and farmer cooperative leadership. These committees will hold quarterly meetings to review school feeding performance, troubleshoot commodity flow, and coordinate non-feeding interventions (deworming with MOH County Health Teams, WASH with county water authorities, literacy boost with County Education Officers). By Year 3, AENI's role in these committees will shift from convener to technical advisor as committees assume full operational responsibility.

**At the school-community level**, AENI will build and reinforce Parent-Teacher Associations as the institutional vehicle for sustained community ownership of school feeding. Each of the 312 READY schools will have an active PTA with documented bylaws, a school feeding sub-committee, and a quarterly review of cook performance, commodity records, and student attendance. PTAs will manage school gardens under technical guidance from county agriculture extension staff and AENI's agronomy team.

**Coordination with WFP.** WFP and McGovern-Dole implementers operate in different counties under different commodity baskets, which creates risks of inconsistent standards and complicates eventual GoL takeover. AENI proposes a quarterly partner forum, co-convened with WFP Liberia and Save the Children, focused on aligning monitoring protocols, training curricula for cooks and storekeepers, and commodity quality standards. The forum will produce a public partner-aligned cook training curriculum by Year 2 for adoption across all donor-funded school feeding in Liberia.

**Coordination with Save the Children.** AENI will pursue a direct memorandum of understanding with Save the Children for transition planning at the school level. The MOU will specify which schools are transitioning at which dates, what records and assets transfer, and which community structures (PTAs, school garden committees, kitchen brigades) AENI will assume. AENI's project lead and Save the Children's LEARN II project lead will hold monthly coordination meetings during the transition period through Q2 of Year 1.

**Coordination with the private sector and cooperatives.** AENI's LRP strategy depends on consolidating supply through twelve farmer cooperatives in the four target counties. AENI is in discussion with [NEEDS REAL DATA: specific cooperatives by name] including the cooperatives currently supplying LEARN II's Power Gari procurement in Grand Gedeh and River Gee (Lydia's Field Project and Sustainable Agricultural and Nutrition Organization, both of which received gristmill support from LEARN II in 2024 per [Save the Children](#)). AENI will not duplicate existing supplier relationships but will expand the cooperative supply base to cover increased volume and add commodity diversity (fonio, dark leafy greens, palm oil for cooking).

**Coordination toward graduation: MOU with the Government of Liberia.** AENI will pursue, within the first six months of award, a project-specific Memorandum of Understanding with the MOE Minister and Permanent Secretary specifying milestones for GoL co-financing and operational handover by year. The MOU template is included as a project deliverable in Year 1 of the Plan of Operation. AENI's experience [NEEDS REAL EVIDENCE FROM AENI: cite a prior MOU with a sub-Saharan African ministry, or replace with reference to a relevant peer organization precedent].

## 1.4 Strategy (Pages 11-12, ~900 words)

READY Liberia addresses the gaps identified in the Country Overview through nine integrated activities organized around three pillars: reliable school feeding, classroom learning, and sustained handover.

**Target geography and beneficiaries.** READY Liberia will operate in Grand Gedeh, River Gee, Rivercess, and Grand Bassa counties, the same four counties USDA has funded through the LEARN and LEARN II projects since 2018. This continuity is explicitly directed by USDA's Country Specific Guidance for Liberia, which states future programming "should focus on the same counties as the current project ... and should support schools and communities served by the current project." AENI will continue support to all 234 LEARN II schools and add 78 adjacent schools in the same four counties, identified in coordination with County Education Officers based on enrollment, malnutrition burden, road accessibility, and proximity to existing LRP cooperative supply.

The 312 schools represent approximately 22% of the schools in the four target counties. AENI will mitigate the risk of student migration between project and non-project schools through three mechanisms: phased introduction of project activities (school feeding starts in cohort 1 schools in Year 1, cohort 2 in Year 2), County Education Officer monitoring of enrollment shifts, and PTA-level communication ensuring parents understand the gradual phase-up and the graduation timeline.

**Commodities and LRP.** READY Liberia will use three U.S.-provided commodities (fortified milled rice, yellow split peas, fortified vegetable oil), the same commodity baseline USDA has used in Liberia since 2018 and the basis on which schools, cooks, and supply chain systems are oriented. LRP will procure Power Gari (fortified cassava-based porridge, used as a complement to rice for menu diversification and as a contingency commodity during pipeline breaks), local fonio (a drought-resistant grain for menu rotation), and dark leafy greens through cooperative procurement. LRP will be capped at 9.8% of the federal award. LRP commodities are selected and procured with three purposes: mitigating pipeline breaks during rainy season; building local farmer-cooperative supply capacity that will outlast the project; and improving dietary diversity beyond the three-commodity USDA baseline.

**Literacy and education response.** READY Liberia will pair school feeding with a specific literacy intervention package: Literacy Boost (LB), a structured curriculum and teacher coaching program with documented impact in low-resource settings, adapted to Liberian context. Each of the 312 schools will receive LB implementation, including teacher training on early-grade reading methods, classroom libraries with locally produced reading materials, and community reading groups. AENI will conduct Early Grade Reading Assessments at baseline, midterm, and endline in a representative sub-sample of 60 schools to measure reading-outcome change.

**Health, nutrition, and dietary practices.** READY Liberia will deliver classroom-based nutrition education using MOH-approved curricula, provide deworming treatment twice annually in coordination with County Health Teams (subject to baseline helminth confirmation), and install or rehabilitate WASH infrastructure in all 312 schools including sex-segregated latrines, handwashing stations with soap, and reliable potable water sources. School Health Clubs will operate in all schools as a vehicle for student-led hygiene promotion. AENI will pilot anthropometric measurement (weight-for-age and BMI-for-age z-scores) in 24 schools to test feasibility and produce nutrition-status evidence for the MOE.

**Girls' education and child safeguarding.** READY Liberia will continue and expand the LEARN II PTA-led safeguarding interventions, including: SRGBV reporting structures with confidential pathways; menstrual hygiene management infrastructure and supplies; community awareness on age-appropriate enrollment; and a take-home ration component (one of the three U.S. commodities, monthly) for households with girls in upper-primary grades at risk of dropout. The take-home ration purpose is to incentivize sustained attendance, not to substitute for school meals.

**Graduation strategy: continuity to transition.** Unlike a new-country project, READY Liberia inherits a partially built community and county infrastructure from LEARN II. The graduation strategy concentrates on three structural shifts: moving school feeding cost responsibility from USDA to GoL (with a costed Year-by-Year transition table in the Graduation Plan), embedding READY Liberia's operational tools (digital tracking, training curricula, monitoring protocols) into MOE's School Feeding Division so they outlive the project, and certifying 312 community-level structures (PTAs, school garden committees, kitchen brigades) as the institutional foundation for community ownership. By project end, AENI will have transferred operational responsibility for 100% of READY schools to the Government of Liberia.

**Alignment with U.S. foreign assistance priorities.** READY Liberia procures all U.S. commodities from American farmers and producers via the USDA commodity procurement pipeline. At least 50% of ocean transport will be on U.S.-flag vessels per the Cargo Preference Act and McGovern-Dole regulations. The project supports U.S. agricultural markets directly through commodity purchase and indirectly through Liberia's growing capacity to absorb agricultural commodity assistance through a functioning national feeding program. Beyond commodity volume, READY Liberia advances U.S. interests by demonstrating visible, accountable American leadership in a country where U.S. development assistance has been continuous since 2009 and where China's footprint in education has grown over the same period.

**Risk management.** AENI's risk framework, detailed in Organizational Capacity, addresses commodity diversion through three-layer tracking; partner failure through performance-based subaward management with quarterly milestones; political instability through scenario planning and pre-positioned commodity stocks; safeguarding violations through mandatory training,

confidential reporting, and zero-tolerance HR policies; and natural disasters through pre-positioning and risk-financing reserves built into the budget.

**Project Map** [attachment, no page limit]: A map showing the four target counties, the location of AENI's Monrovia office, the location of the proposed regional office in Zwedru (Grand Gedeh), warehouse locations at the Port of Monrovia and the regional pre-positioning facility, and the 312 target schools color-coded by cohort (existing LEARN II vs. expansion) is described and would be appended to the submitted application.

## 2. Plan of Operation (Pages 13-32, outline)

**Page limit:** 20 pages total. Activity Descriptions 15-16 pages, Ration Justification 1-2 pages, Graduation Plan 3 pages.

### 2.1 Activity Descriptions (9 activities; 15-16 pages)

Each activity will follow the Appendix I template format with: activity title, implementer, coordinating entities, objectives, anticipated beneficiaries, graduation milestones, and narrative description with implementation steps, timeline, links to ISA needs, barriers, and activity-specific risk management.

#	Activity Title (use FAIS standard titles where possible)	Lead Implementer	Coordinating Entities	Target Beneficiaries
1	School Feeding Daily Meals Provision	AENI Liberia	MOE-SFD, County Education Officers, PTAs	78,400 students
2	Literacy Boost Implementation and Teacher Coaching	AENI Education Team + Sub-partner: [NEEDS REAL: literacy specialist NGO]	MOE Curriculum Division, County Education Officers	78,400 students, 2,340 teachers
3	WASH Infrastructure	Sub-partner: [NEEDS REAL:	MOH County Health Teams,	312 schools

#	Activity Title (use FAIS standard titles where possible)	Lead Implementer	Coordinating Entities	Target Beneficiaries
	and Hygiene Promotion	WASH-specialist NGO]	county water authorities	
4	School Health and Nutrition (Deworming, Anthropometry pilot, Health Clubs)	AENI + MOH County Health Teams	MOE, MOH	78,400 students; anthropometry pilot in 24 schools
5	School Gardens and Nutrition Education	AENI Agronomy + County Agriculture Coordinators	MOA, PTAs	312 schools, ~18,720 PTA members
6	Take-Home Rations for Girls in Upper Primary	AENI Liberia	PTAs, County Education Officers	~6,200 upper-primary girls and families
7	Local and Regional Procurement and Cooperative Strengthening	AENI Procurement + Sub-partner: [NEEDS REAL: cooperative dev NGO]	MOA, 12 farmer cooperatives	12 cooperatives, ~3,600 smallholder farmer households
8	Policy and System Strengthening (MOE School Feeding Division support)	AENI Senior Policy Advisor	MOE Permanent Secretary, MOE-SFD, SMC Secretariat	National-level system
9	Child Safeguarding and SRGBV Prevention	AENI + PTA federations	MOE, MOH, child protection actors	312 schools, all students and staff

For each activity, the narrative will specify: planned year-by-year implementation timeline; how the activity responds to needs flagged in the ISA (literacy gap, stunting, gender-disaggregated dropout, etc.); barriers to graduation (e.g., GoL fiscal capacity, cooperative business sophistication) and AENI's mitigation; and activity-specific risk management (commodity oversight, community feedback mechanisms, monitoring frequency, fraud/waste detection).

**School meals activity (Activity 1) must additionally include:**

- Plan for mitigating commodity contamination at all food-handling stages
- Training plan for cooks and storekeepers on food safety, hygiene, storage, and preparation
- WASH for cooking, including potable water source verification at each school
- Deworming implementation plan (covered in Activity 4)

**2.2 Ration Justification (1-2 pages)**

**Proposed daily school meal (cooked, per child):**

Food Group	Commodity	Source	Per-child uncooked serving	Per-child cooked serving
Cereals	Fortified milled rice	U.S.	80 g	~180 g cooked
Legumes	Yellow split peas	U.S.	25 g	~55 g cooked
Fats	Fortified vegetable oil	U.S.	10 g	10 g (cooked into meal)
Cereals/Starchy Roots	Power Gari (fortified cassava)	LRP	30 g (alternating menu days)	~80 g cooked
Vegetables	Dark leafy greens	LRP	25 g	~30 g cooked

**Frequency:** 5 days/week, 170 school days per year, 78,400 children per day.

**Estimated calories and nutrients per child meal (cooked):** Target  $\geq 420$  kcal (one-third of age-appropriate daily requirement for 6-11 year olds per FAO/WHO 2004 standards),  $\geq 10$ g protein,  $\geq 35\%$  RDA iron,  $\geq 35\%$  RDA vitamin A,  $\geq 35\%$  RDA zinc. AENI will use the NutVal nutrient analysis tool (developed by HKI and WFP) for ration optimization, with results documented in the M&E system.

**Menu rotation rationale:** A two-week alternating menu cycle provides variety, prevents menu fatigue, and aligns with local taste preferences documented during community consultation. The rice-and-peas base provides reliable calorie and protein floors; Power Gari days add cassava familiarity and support local processing economy; leafy greens add micronutrient density.

**Bulk preparation and serving controls:** Each school kitchen will operate to a written daily preparation protocol with measured ingredient quantities calibrated to enrollment. Standardized scoops (donated to schools as part of kitchen infrastructure investment) ensure each child receives the correct ration regardless of serving order. Storekeepers maintain daily logs of inflows, preparation quantities, and waste.

### 2.3 Graduation Plan and Timeline (3 pages)

**Graduation philosophy.** READY Liberia transitions schools, systems, and stakeholders rather than handing over a project at endline. By Year 5, the GoL will fully own and operate school feeding in all 312 READY schools, with budget, personnel, supply chains, and monitoring systems in place.

**Graduation Milestones Table (illustrative; full version with quantitative targets):**

Year	Schools transitioned to GoL operational responsibility	GoL co-financing share of READY school feeding costs	Cooperatives supplying GoL school feeding independently	Tools/protocols embedded in MOE-SFD
Y1	0 (baseline; AENI 100%)	0%	0	MOU signed; SFD policy advisor seconded; revised NSFP drafting begins
Y2	0	15% (selected operational costs assumed by counties)	2 of 12	Digital commodity tracking system co-designed
Y3	25% (78 schools)	35%	6 of 12	Revised NSFP adopted; cook training

Year	Schools transitioned to GoL operational responsibility	GoL co-financing share of READY school feeding costs	Cooperatives supplying GoL school feeding independently	Tools/protocols embedded in MOE-SFD
				curriculum institutionalized
Y4	65% (203 schools)	65%	10 of 12	County school feeding committees operate independently
Y5	100% (312 schools)	100%	12 of 12	All systems handed over; AENI exits

**Critical assumptions:** GoL maintains or grows the \$7.5M school feeding budget allocation, reaching \$15M by 2031; political transitions do not disrupt MOE leadership continuity at the SFD; rainy-season road infrastructure does not degrade further; LEARN II's existing cooperative supply infrastructure remains operational during transition.

**Key challenges and mitigations:**

- GoL fiscal capacity. Mitigation: AENI's policy advisor will support MOE in case-making for ring-fenced school feeding budget allocation, drawing on regional benchmarks from Ghana, Côte d'Ivoire, and Kenya.
- Cooperative business sophistication. Mitigation: Activity 7 includes a dedicated cooperative business support track with milestones for independent contracting with GoL by Year 4.
- Knowledge transfer. Mitigation: AENI deploys a designated transition manager in Year 3 whose sole job is documenting protocols, training MOE counterparts, and validating that systems run independently of AENI personnel before exit.

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### 3. Organizational Capacity and Staffing (Pages 33-40, outline)

**Page limit:** 8 pages total. Staffing Plan 6 pages, Org Chart 1 page, In-Country Registration 1 page.

### 3.1 Staffing Plan (6 pages)

**Project Lead (Chief of Party).** [NEEDS REAL: AENI nominee with 10+ years senior school feeding or food security project management experience in sub-Saharan Africa, prior McGovern-Dole or comparable USDA/USG cooperative agreement experience, French and/or relevant West African language facility, MBA or MPH preferred]. The CoP is based in Monrovia, reports to AENI's Vice President for International Programs in HQ, and is the AOR's principal point of contact. CV attached.

**Deputy Chief of Party (Programs).** Based in Monrovia. Manages education, nutrition, and health teams.

**Deputy Chief of Party (Operations).** Based in Monrovia. Manages procurement, commodity, finance, HR, M&E, compliance.

**Regional Project Director (Zwedru, Grand Gedeh).** Manages the four-county field implementation.

**Country technical leads:** Education and Literacy, Nutrition and Health, WASH, Agriculture and LRP, Child Safeguarding, M&E.

**Senior Policy Advisor (50% time, Years 1-2; reducing to 25% in Years 3-4; exits Year 5).** Embedded part-time with the MOE School Feeding Division.

**Field officers per county:** Four county-level managers with sub-county field officers reporting up.

**Sub-recipients (anticipated):**

- [NEEDS REAL: literacy specialist NGO with Liberia presence], \$1.4M for Literacy Boost implementation and teacher coaching
- [NEEDS REAL: WASH-specialist NGO], \$1.6M for WASH infrastructure and hygiene promotion
- [NEEDS REAL: cooperative development NGO], \$1.2M for LRP and cooperative strengthening

Each sub-recipient will provide a project-specific commitment letter (Section 4.2.d required attachment) before submission.

**Risk assessment and management.** AENI maintains an enterprise risk register reviewed quarterly by the Board's Audit Committee. The project-specific risk register, refreshed quarterly, will cover commodity diversion, financial mismanagement, safeguarding violations, partner

non-performance, political instability, environmental disruption, and cyber/data security. Each risk has an owner, mitigation actions, and a residual rating. AENI's compliance team is led by a Director of Risk and Compliance reporting independently to the CEO and Board, with no operational program responsibilities. The compliance team conducts annual on-site reviews of every field office and has authority to suspend activities pending investigation findings.

**Fraud, waste, and abuse controls:**

- Three-layer commodity tracking (described in Commodity Management)
- Mandatory ethics training for all staff and sub-recipients annually with documented completion
- Confidential whistleblower hotline operated by [NEEDS REAL: independent third-party provider] from project Day 1
- Quarterly internal audit of project finance and commodity records by AENI HQ Audit team
- Annual A-133/Single Audit by independent external auditors (results attached to annual reports)
- Pre-employment background checks, conflict-of-interest declarations updated annually, and rotation of procurement decision-makers

### 3.2 Organizational Chart (1 page)

[Visual organizational chart showing AENI HQ → AENI Liberia Country Office → Field Offices, with reporting lines from sub-recipients into AENI Country Office, and clear demarcation between programmatic and compliance functions.]

### 3.3 In-Country Registration (1 page)

[NEEDS REAL: AENI's registration with the Liberia Ministry of Foreign Affairs / NGO Coordination authority, registration number, date, and current standing. If AENI is not yet registered, this is a hard prerequisite that must be resolved before application submission since the country guidance assumes operational presence.]

### 3.4 Required attachments

- CV of Project Lead (no page limit)
- Project-specific commitment letters from each anticipated sub-recipient (no page limit)
- AENI's most recent NICRA (no page limit; required if claiming indirect costs)
- AENI's most recent A-133 / Single Audit if applicable (no page limit)

## 4. Monitoring and Evaluation (Pages 41-51, outline)

**Page limit:** 11 pages total. Project-Level Results Framework 3 pages, Performance Indicator Table 5 pages, M&E Brief 3 pages.

### 4.1 Project-Level Results Framework (3 pages)

A graphical Results Framework will visually link READY Liberia's nine activities to the McGovern-Dole Program-Level Results Framework (Appendix E of the NOFO). The RF will identify which program-level Foundational Results, Intermediate Results, and Strategic Objectives READY Liberia contributes to, including:

- SO1 (Improved Literacy of School-Aged Children): contributing through Literacy Boost (Activity 2), school meals (Activity 1), WASH (Activity 3), take-home rations (Activity 6)
- SO2 (Increased Use of Health, Nutrition, and Dietary Practices): contributing through SHN (Activity 4), school gardens (Activity 5), school meals (Activity 1)
- LRP results: contributing through LRP and cooperative strengthening (Activity 7)
- Custom graduation results: GoL co-financing growth, GoL operational responsibility transfer, MOE-SFD system institutionalization (Activity 8)

### 4.2 Performance Indicator Table (5 pages)

Standard McGovern-Dole indicators where corresponding results are addressed by the project. The table will include the three required LRP standard indicators (LRP-4, LRP-5, LRP-6) plus additional relevant LRP indicators. Custom indicators will include:

- Graduation indicators tied to milestone table in Plan of Operation Section 2.3
- Complementary feeding indicators (kg of locally procured vegetables, number of meals including legumes/vegetables)
- Anthropometric pilot indicators (weight-for-age z-scores, BMI-for-age z-scores in 24 schools)
- Literacy indicators (EGRA scores at baseline, midterm, endline in 60 representative schools)

Each indicator row will include: Performance Indicator, Standard or Custom, Baseline Value (or "to be established Year 1" where appropriate), Year 1-5 Targets, Life of Project Target.

### 4.3 M&E Brief (3 pages)

- M&E team structure: M&E Director (Monrovia), four county M&E Officers, project database administrator

- Data collection: digital data collection on tablets for school monitoring (monthly), annual cross-sectional surveys, EGRA at baseline/midterm/endline, food-utilization assessments per ration justification
  - External evaluation: baseline (Year 1), midterm (Year 3), endline (Year 5) by an independent evaluator [NEEDS REAL: evaluator with experience in Liberia or West African school feeding evaluations]
  - Data management and quality assurance: defined protocols for data verification, missing data handling, attribution
  - Reporting: semi-annual performance reports to USDA, FAIS data input quarterly, annual A-133 audit
  - M&E budget: 3.4% of project operating budget, exceeding the 3% minimum
- 

## 5. Commodity Management (Pages 52-58, outline)

**Page limit:** 7 pages.

### 5.1 U.S. commodity transportation, storage, and handling

- Commodity procurement through USDA/FAS pipeline; arrival at Port of Monrovia (Freeport)
- Primary warehouse at Freeport, dedicated bonded storage with 24-hour security, climate control for grain, pest monitoring
- Regional pre-positioning facility in Zwedru (Grand Gedeh) servicing all four counties with 90-day rainy-season stock buffer
- Transportation from primary warehouse to county warehouses on a quarterly cycle adjusted for seasonal access
- Transportation from county warehouses to schools on a monthly cycle (more frequent in dry season; pre-positioned for rainy season)

### 5.2 LRP commodity transportation, storage, and handling

- LRP procurement directly from twelve cooperatives in the four target counties
- Quality testing at procurement (moisture content, foreign matter, microbiological screening for Power Gari)
- Storage at county warehouses alongside U.S. commodities with clear segregation
- Distribution on same schedule as U.S. commodities

### 5.3 Reprocessing and repackaging

[NEEDS REAL: AENI's plans for any reprocessing or repackaging; default assumption is none required for the commodity basket]

## 5.4 Market studies

- Market study for each LRP commodity (Power Gari, fonio, dark leafy greens) at project start
- Quarterly market monitoring to detect price disruptions, supply concentration, or distortionary effects on local markets
- Procurement volumes capped at percentages that prior market studies demonstrate are absorbable without local price distortion (typical threshold: not exceeding 10% of regional market volume for any single commodity in any single procurement cycle)

## 5.5 LRP procurement methodology

- Competitive solicitation among prequalified cooperatives
  - Cooperative prequalification based on production capacity, governance, financial systems, and food safety compliance
  - Contract terms publicly available
  - Quality acceptance criteria and rejection procedures documented
  - Capacity building activities for cooperatives (Activity 7) budgeted under project operating costs, not under the 10% LRP cap
- 

## 6. Budget (Pages 59-84, outline)

**Page limit:** 26 pages. Budget Summary 1 page, Budget Narrative 25 pages.

### 6.1 Budget Summary (1 page, Appendix C format)

(See Table 1 in the ISA Summary. Full Appendix C-1 template will be completed with year-by-year breakouts.)

### 6.2 Budget Narrative (25 pages)

Will follow Appendix D structure with the following major categories:

1. **Personnel** (Monrovia + field): within GS-15 cap (\$164,301/year FY26); detailed line items for CoP, DCoPs, technical leads, county managers, field officers, drivers, security, administrative staff
2. **Fringe Benefits:** per AENI fringe rate negotiated under NICRA
3. **Travel:** international (HQ oversight visits), in-country (Monrovia to counties), meeting travel
4. **Equipment:** vehicles (4WD for rainy-season access in southeast), kitchen equipment for 312 schools, IT infrastructure for digital tracking system, generators for warehouses

5. **Supplies:** office supplies, school supplies, classroom libraries, hygiene supplies
6. **Contractual / Sub-recipients:** three sub-recipients budgeted at amounts noted in Staffing
7. **Construction:** WASH infrastructure (312 schools), kitchen rehabilitation, warehouse rehabilitation if needed
8. **Other Direct Costs:** communications, banking, audit, evaluation, insurance, security services
9. **Indirect Costs:** per NICRA rate applied to allowable base

**LRP budget summary** (covering commodity cost, ITSH allocable to LRP, procurement staff time allocable to LRP) = \$2,400,000 = 9.8% of federal award.

**M&E budget** = \$649,000 = 3.4% of project operating budget.

**Voluntary cost share** = \$325,000 (~1.7% of project operating budget), covering [NEEDS REAL: AENI to identify; possibilities include staff time on policy advocacy not chargeable to federal award, AENI HQ-funded training and convening, and value of pro bono technical advisory services from peer organizations]. Documented in budget narrative for the 2-point bonus per Section 6.2.

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## 7. Required FAIS data entry

Per NOFO Section 4.2 and Appendix A, AENI must complete required FAIS fields including Introduction Details, Key Personnel pointer, Results pointer, Activities pointer, Activity Mapping pointer, Commodity List (completed fields), Special Needs & Distribution Methods pointer, Monetization marked Not Applicable, Budget Narrative pointer.

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## 8. Required attachments checklist (Appendix A)

- SF-424, signed
- SF-424A, completed per Appendix F instructions
- Proof of 501(c)(3) status
- Project Narrative PDF (sections 1-6 above, within page limits)
- Project Map (attachment to ISA)
- List of Acronyms (attachment to ISA)
- Organizational Chart (1 page)
- In-Country Registration evidence
- Sub-recipient project-specific commitment letters (one per sub)

- CV of Project Lead
  - Most recent NICRA agreement
  - Grants.gov Lobbying Form (post-notification only, if award >\$100K)
  - SF-LLL if applicable
- 

## Gap flags. What AENI must verify, replace, or add before submission

### Critical (must resolve before submission)

1. **Confirm AENI's eligibility.** SAM.gov active registration with no exclusions; valid UEI; 501(c)(3) status; absence of any of the eight programmatic capability concerns in NOFO Section 6.3 (terminated agreements, unpaid federal debt, late reports, high-risk designation, commodity loss history). If any of these conditions are present, the application risks failure at threshold review or scoring penalty.
2. **Confirm AENI's prior McGovern-Dole or comparable USDA/USG experience.** A mid-sized PVO making a second McGovern-Dole bid needs to cite, by name, a prior award and its results. This draft assumes AENI has a prior McGovern-Dole award (which would be referenced in Organizational Capacity). If AENI's first McGovern-Dole bid was unsuccessful and it has not held a comparable award, the scoring on Organizational Capacity (12 points) and the Section 6.3 past performance review will weigh heavily against the application. Mitigate by citing the most comparable prior award (USDA/FAS Local Regional Procurement program, USAID Title II, or a major foundation school feeding award) and its documented results.
3. **AENI's Liberia in-country registration.** Required. If AENI is not yet registered with the Liberia Ministry of Foreign Affairs, the application may be ineligible. If AENI is registered through a partner only, this needs explicit explanation.
4. **Replace fictional sub-recipient placeholders with real partner names** and obtain project-specific commitment letters from each before submission. Strong candidates from the Liberia operating environment include: a literacy partner (consider organizations that have worked with MOE Liberia on EGRA or early-grade reading); a WASH partner (consider organizations active in southeastern Liberia); a cooperative development partner (consider organizations working with smallholder cooperatives in the four counties).
5. **Confirm cooperative supplier relationships** by name and obtain letters of intent. Specifically: relationship with Lydia's Field Project and Sustainable Agricultural and Nutrition Organization in Grand Gedeh, plus a documented plan to identify and onboard ten additional cooperatives across the four counties.
6. **Project Lead CV.** Required attachment. CoP must have demonstrated McGovern-Dole or comparable experience.

### High priority (strengthen before submission)

7. **Verify the \$7.5M GoL school feeding budget figure for 2026.** The NOFO states \$7.5M; the MOE's public commitment at the 2025 SMC Summit references \$5M; reconcile and use the verified figure.
8. **Confirm the helminth infection rates in the four target counties** with current MOH data. If rates are at or above 20% and no other actor is implementing deworming, AENI must continue deworming activities (which Activity 4 includes). If rates have fallen below 20% or another actor is implementing in the same schools, AENI may scale back without penalty.
9. **Coordinate explicitly with Save the Children on the transition.** A signed MOU or letter of intent from Save the Children acknowledging the proposed continuity, transition timeline, and data/asset transfer protocol would substantially strengthen the application's coordination scoring.
10. **Verify county-level stunting data.** This draft cites a 25% chronic malnutrition rate in Maryland County (per WFP); confirm the corresponding rates for the four target counties using the 2019-2020 Liberia Demographic and Health Survey or a more recent source.
11. **Build out the Project Map.** A high-quality map of target counties, schools, warehouses, and offices is referenced but not produced.
12. **Run nutrient analysis on the proposed ration through NutVal or equivalent** to confirm the meal meets the one-third of daily requirements threshold for the target age group. Document software, assumptions, and results.

### Lower priority (improve before submission if time permits)

13. **Strengthen the cost share narrative.** \$325K voluntary cost share (1.7% of project operating budget) is positioned for the 2-point bonus. The narrative needs concrete sources, reasonable valuation, and a clear commitment.
14. **Strengthen risk register specifics.** This draft outlines AENI's risk framework but does not produce the populated project-specific risk register. Add this as a working appendix referenced in the Organizational Capacity section.
15. **Refine indicator targets.** All Year-by-Year targets in the Performance Indicator Table need real baseline data and reasoned target-setting based on LEARN/LEARN II evaluation findings.
16. **Build the project-level Results Framework graphic** explicitly mapping each activity to McGovern-Dole program-level results from NOFO Appendix E.
17. **Resolve the apparent discrepancy in stunting data** (29.8% per Global Nutrition Report; 26.6% per UN Nutrition/UNICEF; 60% per 2024 Global Hunger Index). The GHI figure appears to use a different definition or methodology; explain the choice in the ISA.

## Submission logistics

18. **FAIS account.** AENI must establish a FAIS account well in advance of the June 22, 2026 deadline. USDA recommends 5+ business days for issue resolution; AENI should begin registration immediately.
19. **Question submission deadline.** June 12, 2026 at 5:00pm EDT. Use it. Specific questions about Liberia targeting beyond the four southeastern counties, anthropometry pilot expectations, and digital tracking system requirements are worth raising.
20. **Submit early.** USDA explicitly recommends submission 1-2 days before the June 22, 2026 deadline.

EXAMPLE