

Existing Processor Expansion Grant (Tier 3)

2023 REQUEST FOR APPLICATIONS

The [Northeast Dairy Business Innovation Center](#) (NE-DBIC) announces the availability of funds through the Existing Dairy Processor Expansion Grant program to address the significant need for investment in processing infrastructure in the Northeast. This grant will only fund **existing** dairy processing facilities located in the Northeast region with a focus on expanding utilization of regionally sourced milk, dairy components, and/or dairy mix, and diversifying the supply chain.

Projects funded through this grant will focus primarily on acquiring specialized equipment needed to increase processing capacity through volume expansion and existing product line expansion. Additional activities related to training, marketing, or supply chain logistics that directly support increased production capacity may be included.

Grants are available to applicants in all Northeast states: Connecticut, Delaware, Maine, Maryland, Massachusetts, New Hampshire, New Jersey, New York, Pennsylvania, Rhode Island, and Vermont.

Multiple tiers of grant funding ranges will be available to processors at a variety of sizes. Processors may apply in one of three grant tiers based on their scale.

KEY DATES

Tier 3 RFA Release Date: March 31, 2023

Tier 3 Full Application Opens: April 13, 2023

Tier 3 Full Application Deadline: August 24, 2023 at 2:00 PM ET

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CONTACT

PROGRAM QUESTIONS

Ben Eldredge
 Grants Coordinator
Ben.Eldredge@vermont.gov
 (802) 522-9478

WEBGRANTS TECHNICAL ASSISTANCE

Rebecca Brockett
 Grants & Contracts Administrator
Rebecca.Brockett@vermont.gov
 (802) 636-7016

Support is generally available during business hours: Monday – Friday, 7:45 AM to 4:30 PM ET. Assistance may not be available shortly before deadlines.

RESOURCES FOR APPLYING

WebGrants Guides and resources for registering and applying can be found on our [Resources for Applicants and Recipients webpage](#).

REGISTERING IN WEBGRANTS

Applicants that have not previously registered in WebGrants will need to allow 1 – 2 business days for their registration to be processed. During that time, applicants will not be able to login to start an application. Please plan your application process accordingly.

SUBMISSION POLICY

It is the applicant’s responsibility to adhere to all application instructions including the submission dates and times included in this request for applications (RFA). The Northeast Dairy Business Innovation Center via the Vermont Agency of Agriculture, Food & Markets (VAAFAM) will accept the last validated electronic submission through the grants management system, [WebGrants](#), prior to the posted deadline as the final and sole acceptable submission of an application.

Submission or re-submission of incomplete or delayed applications after the posted deadline, barring exceptional circumstances will not be accepted.

WebGrants will prevent applications from being submitted after the cut-off time.

SUBMISSION CONFIRMATION

When an application has successfully been submitted, the applicant will receive a confirmation email from < agriculturegrants.vermont@mail.webgrantscloud.com >. Please add this email address to your “safe senders” list. If you do not receive this confirmation, please check your junk or spam folder.

I. PROGRAM OVERVIEW

QUICK FACTS

THE NORTHEAST DAIRY BUSINESS INNOVATION CENTER

The Northeast Dairy Business Innovation Center (NE-DBIC), hosted by the Vermont Agency of Agriculture, Food and Markets (VAAF), is one of four USDA-AMS Dairy Business Innovation Initiatives (DBII) in the nation. The NE-DBIC serves the 11-state Northeast region which includes Connecticut, Delaware, Maine, Maryland, Massachusetts, New Hampshire, New Jersey, New York, Pennsylvania, Rhode Island, and Vermont by supporting dairy businesses through projects that promote the development, production, marketing, and distribution of dairy products. Projects target dairy farms and processors while providing additional support through market research and technical assistance. Since its inception in 2019, the Northeast Dairy Business Innovation Center has received \$38.7 million to support projects in the Northeast region of the U.S.

ELIGIBILITY SUMMARY

Licensed dairy processors located in the Northeast region of the United States may apply for this grant if they both 1) process regionally sourced milk within the Northeast and 2) are compliant with all required state and federal standards. If the business is not headquartered in the Northeast but has processing facilities in the region, they may apply for grant funds to support regionally located plants. Funds may be used to support the renewal of operations at a dairy processing plant that is currently not producing product. The plant must be currently or previously licensed.

For purposes of this grant, milk means fluid milk, dairy components, and/or dairy mix.

Applicants will qualify into tiers outlined below based on milk utilized on an average production day, regardless of the number of days per week they process. Volume may differ based on the product made and processors should reference the volume measurement for their specific product. Volume is a measurement of inputs and not finished products.

If an applicant qualifies into a higher tier but the award range is higher than their project costs, they may apply into a lower tier.

Tier	Volume of Milk Utilized on an Average Production Day	Award Range	Total Funds Available
Tier 1*	100,001+	\$500,000 – 1,000,000	Approximately \$6,000,000
Tier 2*	1,001 – 100,000	\$100,000 – 650,000	Approximately \$4,000,000
Tier 3	1 – 1,000	\$25,000 – 250,000	Approximately \$2,000,000

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*Tiers 1 & 2 must complete a Pre-Application before the deadline of May 11, 2023 at 2:00 PM ET. Refer to the [Tier 1 & 2 specific RFA](#).

AVAILABLE FUNDS

Tier 1 awards: approximately \$6,000,000
Tier 2 awards: approximately \$4,000,000
Tier 3 awards: approximately \$2,000,000
Total program (Tiers 1, 2, &3): \$12,000,000

MINIMUM & MAXIMUM AWARD

Tier 1 Minimum: \$500,000
Tier 1 Maximum: \$1,000,000

Tier 2 Minimum: \$100,000
Tier 2: Maximum: \$650,000

Tier 3 Minimum: \$25,000
Tier 3 Maximum: \$250,000

Match: A 25% (cash and/or in-kind) match commitment is required for all tiers.

Grant funds will be distributed to grantees over three payments throughout the course of the grant project. Unless otherwise arranged with the grant program manager, default payment structure of this grant is 60% of grant funds upfront, 20% of funds mid-project, and 20% of funds once the grant is complete.

PROJECT LENGTH

Grant periods will range from 9 – 15 months, depending on the project.

FUNDING SOURCE

Funds are available through the Northeast Dairy Business Innovation Center which is made possible by funding through the U.S. Department of Agriculture's (USDA) Agricultural Marketing Service (AMS) through award, AM21DBIVT1011-00.

FUNDING OPPORTUNITY DESCRIPTION

The NE-DBIC's Existing Processor Expansion Grant program aims to support the expansion and long-term sustainability of dairy processing in the Northeast. Grants will be available for processors to purchase

SECTION I. PROGRAM OVERVIEW

specialized processing equipment and supplies, and fund other activities that allow them to expand their existing processing.

Successful applications will show that in addition to increasing processing capacity for regional milk, the project will increase labor efficiency, reduce energy inputs and/or climate impacts, add value to underutilized products, and/or otherwise address the expansion needs of dairy processors. Projects should demonstrate long-term impacts for the processors.

ELIGIBILITY

ELIGIBLE APPLICANTS

Applicants eligible for these funds must be dairy processors that transform milk (for purposes of this grant, milk means fluid milk, dairy components, or dairy mix) sourced from the Northeast region into an edible product and be:

1. licensed dairy processor in compliance with all required state and/or federal standards, as required for the sales outlets reached during the timeframe of this project; and
2. headquartered or based in the Northeast.

Funds may be used to support the renewal of operations at a dairy processing plant that is currently not producing product. The plant must be currently or previously licensed. In this case, the applicant must be an experienced dairy processor (either a company or individual) and must demonstrate this experience in the application narrative.

For purposes of this grant, “milk” means fluid milk, dairy components, and/or dairy mix.

Applicants will qualify into tiers outlined below based on milk utilized on an average production day, regardless of the number of days per week they process. Volume may differ based on the product made and processors should reference the volume measurement for their specific product. For example, cheese producers measure pounds of milk while an ice cream manufacturer would likely purchase gallons of mix. Volume is a measurement of inputs and not finished products.

If an applicant qualifies into a higher tier but the award range is higher than their project costs, they may apply into a lower tier.

Tier	Volume of Milk Utilized on an Average Production Day	Award Range	Total Funds Available
Tier 1	100,001+	\$500,000 – 1,000,000	Approximately \$6,000,000
Tier 2	1,001 – 100,000	\$100,000 – 650,000	Approximately \$4,000,000
Tier 3	1 – 1,000	\$25,000 – 250,000	Approximately \$2,000,000

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Examples of tier qualification:

- A butter processor buys in 50 pounds of cream for an average production day. This processor would qualify for Tier 3.
- An ice cream manufacturer purchases 750 gallons of ice cream mix for their average production day. This processor would qualify for Tier 3.
- A cheese processor buys in 1,250 pounds of milk for an average production day. This processor would qualify for Tier 2. However, the piece of equipment they would like to source is \$50,000 so they may apply into the lower Tier 3 to access lower amounts of grant funds.
- A producer-processor bottles only milk from their farm with an average daily volume of 25,000 pounds. This processor would qualify for Tier 2.
- A yogurt manufacturer buys in 125,000 pounds of skim milk and 10,000 pounds of cream for an average production day. This processor would qualify for Tier 1.

While the following are not required to apply, if applicant is awarded, they will need to provide:

1. Certificate of Insurance listing the VAAFM as an additional insured
2. Current IRS Form W-9
3. Unique Entity Identifier (UEI) number acquired via SAM.gov. *Applicants who do not already have a UEI number are strongly encouraged to start this process during the application period to ensure a timely start to their grant, if awarded. **There are currently significant delays.***

ELIGIBLE PROJECTS

Projects under this grant will assist processors at a variety of scales in expanding their ability to process regionally produced milk, increase value of processed products, and reduce energy and climate impacts of production.

Projects should be scaled appropriately to meet the long-term expansion needs of the business. Applicants should explain how the project fits into their business plan, including information such as expected increased production volume, where additional milk will be sourced, and how increased production will be marketed.

FUNDING PRIORITIES

In addition to increasing processing capacity for regionally produced milk, project approaches should address at least two (2) of the following funding priority areas:

- Project increases labor efficiency and/or worker safety
- Project increases value or marketability of products
- Project reduces energy inputs and/or climate impacts
- Project improves food safety measures

SECTION I. PROGRAM OVERVIEW

- Project increases value of milk for farmers
- Project increases sales, revenue, and/or consumers reached
- Project increases consumer access to goat, sheep, and/or mixed milk products
- Project responds to current market demand or existing market gaps

REQUIRED PROJECT CRITERIA

Effective applications will demonstrate:

1. How the project will increase the volume of regionally sourced raw milk, milk components, or dairy mix that they process.
2. Why it is necessary for the applicant's business to purchase the equipment and any additional costs.
3. Significant impacts on their business including, but not limited to, increased revenue, cost savings, energy savings, and efficiencies in processing milk.
4. How the project will have long-term impacts on their business and/or the wider Northeast dairy processing sector.
5. That there is market demand for expanded production and that the applicant has a robust plan for moving raw and finished product through the supply chain.

PRE-APPROVED SPECIALIZED EQUIPMENT

REQUIRED: At least 75% of grant funds for the project must be used to purchase (and install) new or used specialized equipment and supplies that will expand processing of milk produced in the Northeast region. Applicant must select at least one of the allowable purchases and installation of specialized equipment (purchases \$5,000 or more) or supplies in the following pre-approved list, or seek approval ahead of applying for something not on this list.

1. Milk storage tanks, including bulk tanks and milk silos
2. Milk pipelines
3. Fluid milk bottling equipment
4. Pasteurizers and/or homogenizers
5. Separators
6. Packaging equipment:
 - a. Fillers
 - b. Vacuum sealers
 - c. Label machines
7. Specialty manufacturing equipment:
 - a. Cheese vats, drain tables, wax tanks, brine tanks, molds, presses
 - b. Curd mills
 - c. Shredders, slicers, or cutters
 - d. Ice cream making equipment

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8. Industrial cooling and/or humidity control for specialized use:
 - a. Commercial freezers, refrigerators, and coolers
 - b. Cheese aging environmental controls
 - c. Upgraded glycol chillers
9. Plant modernization:
 - a. Electric yard hoses
 - b. Clean in place (CIP) wash systems
 - c. Foam floor sprays for transition areas
 - d. Systems for water reclamation
 - e. Clean out of place (COP) wash tanks

ADDITIONAL ELIGIBLE COSTS

OPTIONAL: Up to 25% of requested funds can be used for other costs that would complement the installation and purchase of equipment selected or additional activities related to training, marketing, or supply chain logistics that directly support increased production capacity. This can include, but is not limited to:

1. Supplies (any purchases that cost less than \$5,000 per unit)
 - a. E.g., hot water heater (tank style or on-demand), water filtration, milk pipeline, milk pump, sinks, refrigeration
2. Training on the use of new equipment
3. Professional services
4. Personnel & Fringe
5. Travel to source or pick up equipment
6. Other: shipping costs, rental of general use equipment (not for construction)

EXAMPLES: ELIGIBLE PROJECTS

1. *A cheese maker adds a second vat to their processing space in order to be able to run multiple batches of product concurrently, increasing production and efficiency. Production growth will allow them to purchase more milk from their farmer sources at a higher price than the farmers earn otherwise. Applicant shows that they have a plan in place to age and market their increased production.*
2. *A producer-processor wishes to replace their batch pasteurizer with a high temperature short time (HTST) pasteurizer and add a cream separator. This will allow them to save labor and energy on pasteurization and allow them to expand their offerings and increase their revenue.*
3. *A processor has outgrown their current facility and plans to build an addition with more processing space. They will use grant funds to purchase a new processing line with energy efficient chillers as part of the expansion. Construction will be paid for with matching funds.*
4. *A processor will expand their operation by purchasing a defunct processing plant. Grant funds will be used to purchase missing equipment to make the plant functional again, such as an updated pasteurizer and energy efficient chillers.*

INELIGIBLE PROJECTS

- Projects not primarily located within the Northeast
- Projects that solely support the production/sales of raw fluid milk meant for human consumption without pasteurization
- Projects that do not increase the applicant's use of regionally sourced raw milk, milk components, or dairy mix
- Projects that use grant funds for:
 - Construction
 - Purchase or lease-to-own of land/building/facilities
 - Purchase of general equipment (approved specialized equipment is allowable)
 - Purchase of vehicles
 - Costs incurred outside the grant period
 - Unallowable costs/activities as outlined in the [2021 AMS Terms and Conditions](#) (8.0 Allowable Costs and Activities).

EXAMPLES: INELIGIBLE PROJECTS

1. *A processor faces a bottleneck in their distribution space and plans to expand, using grant funds for a forklift, pallet jack, and other supplies for distributing their products.*
 - a. *Why is this ineligible? A forklift and pallet jack are general purpose equipment and therefore ineligible for this grant. The applicant could apply for other specialized equipment specific to dairy processing that is needed for the expansion.*
2. *A cheese maker needs more aging space and applies to build a cheese aging cave that will allow them to purchase more milk from local farmers.*
 - a. *Why is this ineligible? Construction costs are not covered by this grant. The cheese maker could apply to use grant funds for specialized equipment such as temperature control to make the space usable for aging but must find another source for construction costs.*
3. *A processor wishes to conduct research into market gaps to help them develop a new cultured dairy product.*
 - a. *Why is this ineligible? Other grants are a better fit for research and development activities. If the processor had already developed and tested the product and were at the stage of scaling up its production, they could apply for grant funds for specialized equipment they need for production or packaging.*
4. *A farmer seeks to add to their income by bottling and marketing their milk. They wish to purchase a bottling line and pasteurizer.*
 - a. *Why is this ineligible? While a bottling line and pasteurizer are allowable equipment, this grant is focused on expansion of existing processors. Other grants are a better fit for new and start-up processors.*

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BUDGET

At least 75% of all requested grant funds must be used for the purchase and installation of pre-approved specialized equipment and supplies. Please refer to the [Pre-Approved Specialized Equipment](#) section above for a full list of pre-approved equipment and supplies. Grant funds requested must align with the allowable costs detailed in the [2021 AMS Terms and Conditions](#). Quotes for specialized equipment and installation services are required.

MATCHING FUNDS

All proposals must show matching funds which represent at least 25% of the grant request to go toward the grant project. For instance, for a grant request of \$100,000, the applicant must demonstrate at least \$25,000 in match. Matching funds may be contributed by the applicant or by another organization. Applicants can use other funds (state or loan, other non-Federal money) as a match to this project as long as there is not any such restriction in the agreements for those funds. The 25% required match may be any combination of cash and in-kind funds in any expense category, and may cover costs ineligible for grant funds, such as construction. Match funds must be expended within the grant period.

Examples of cash match include funds in the bank, funds contributed by another organization, bank loans, other non-Federal grant funds, applicant labor, and compensation of employees. Labor rates should be in line with current market rates.

Examples of in-kind match include goods or services provided during the grant period for which no expenditure is made (e.g., contractors, consultants, supplies, or equipment provided pro bono for the project; volunteer labor; and/or donated supplies that are not part of the normal cost of doing business). In-kind contributions must be made during the grant agreement period and be directly related to the project.

EXAMPLE OF AN ELIGIBLE BUDGET

Expense Category	Grant Funds Requested	Applicant Contribution - Cash Match	Applicant Contribution - In-kind Match	Project Total
Specialized Equipment	\$80,000.00	\$12,000.00	\$0.00	\$92,000.00
Supplies	\$13,000.00	\$6,000.00	\$0.00	\$19,000.00
Contractual/Consultant	\$0.00	\$3,000.00	\$0.00	\$3,000.00
Training	\$2,000.00	\$0.00	\$0.00	\$2,000.00
Travel	\$0.00	\$0.00	\$0.00	\$0.00
Personnel	\$0.00	\$1,500.00	\$0.00	\$1,500.00
Fringe	\$0.00	\$0.00	\$0.00	\$0.00
Other	\$5,000.00	\$1,500.00	\$1,700.00	\$13,000.00
TOTALS	\$100,000.00	\$24,000.00	\$1,700.00	\$125,700.00

LETTERS OF COMMITMENT/SUPPORT

At least two letters of commitment and/or support are required for this application. Additional letters will increase the competitiveness of the application.

Letters of Commitment should articulate project partners' involvement and identify the contributions they will make to ensure the project's success. Match contributors should describe and assign value to their match commitment (including financial or in-kind support).

Letter(s) of commitment are **required** from any match contributors that are outside of the applicant's business. If there are no match sources outside the applicant's business, the applicant is exempt from this requirement.

Letters of Support should articulate general support from other organizations/businesses and should describe the benefits of the project both for the applicant business and the greater dairy sector or community at large.

It is **strongly encouraged** to include at least one letter of support from a current or new distributor, retailer, wholesaler, or other sales outlet, indicating they will be able to market increased production.

SUPPORTING DOCUMENTATION

The applicant should include any additional information that shows the impacts of this grant such as evidence of cost or energy savings, impact on business viability, quotes for work included in the proposed activities, or other relevant information about the business or the project, etc.

- Quotes or bids are **required** for all specialized equipment purchases and installation services covered by grant funds.

HOW TO APPLY

All applications must be submitted via the WebGrants system at agriculturegrants.vermont.gov. No paper applications will be accepted. Applications will be accepted from April 13, 2023 – August 24, 2023 at 2:00 PM ET.

Applicants that have not previously registered in WebGrants will need to allow 1 – 2 business days for their registration to be processed. During that time, applicants will not be able to login to start an application. Please plan your application process accordingly.

We strongly advise that you submit your application ahead of the deadline. Be advised that technical assistance with WebGrants may not be available shortly before deadlines; please plan accordingly.

SECTION I. PROGRAM OVERVIEW

APPLICATION REVIEW

Applications will each be reviewed by a multi-state NE-DBIC advisory committee comprised of representatives from Northeast state agriculture agencies/departments, agriculture extension agencies, and dairy sector stakeholders. Three reviewers will be assigned to score each application. Funding decisions are made according to scoring, reviewer comments, past grant performance, and with consideration to diversity across geography, herd/milk type, size of operation, and impacts beyond the grantee. See [Section III: Scoring Criteria](#).

AWARD INFORMATION

All applicants will be notified of the NE-DBIC decision of whether to award funds to their project. Awards will be approximately 9 – 15 months in length.

KEY DATES

DATES MAY BE SUBJECT TO CHANGE

March 31, 2023	Request for Application (RFA) released
April 13, 2023	Application released
August 24, 2023 at 2:00 PM ET	Application closes
September 2023	Applicants notified of award decisions
November 2023	Estimated start of grant
Depends on grant project	Interim report due
Depends on grant project (estimated to be between August 2024 and February 2025)	Project end date
30 days after end of project	Final report and survey due

II. FULL APPLICATION

The application content is listed below but may be subject to change. Please reference the [WebGrants Application Guide](#) for guidance on completing your application in the WebGrants system.

APPLICANT INFORMATION

APPLICANT INFORMATION

- Business/organization name, legal entity (e.g., LLC, sole proprietor, etc.), primary contact information

APPLICANT ELIGIBILITY

- Is the applicant a licensed dairy processor that processes milk (for purposes of this grant, milk means fluid milk, dairy components, or dairy mix) and is in compliance with all required state and/or federal standards?
- Is the applicant's business headquartered or based in a Northeast state (Connecticut, Delaware, Maine, Maryland, Massachusetts, New Hampshire, New Jersey, New York, Pennsylvania, Rhode Island, or Vermont)?
- Does the applicant's business source or produce milk that originates within the Northeast?
- Does the applicant's business manufacture dairy products within the Northeast?
- Is the applicant a milk cooperative? If yes:
 - How many farmer-members does your cooperative have?
 - Of your total farmer-owners, provide the percentage that will directly benefit from this project
- Does the applicant source fluid milk directly from farms? If yes:
 - Number of farms from which you currently source fluid milk
 - Describe any premiums you currently offer to the farms from which you source fluid milk
 - List and describe each farm from which you source (location, size of herd, herd type, volume purchased annually)
- Does the applicant source fluid milk from a milk cooperative? If yes:
 - List the milk cooperative(s) from which you source and their location.
 - How many farmer-members does this cooperative have?
- Does the applicant source dairy components or dairy mixes? If yes:
 - List the processor(s) from which you source and their location.
 - From how many farms does that facility source milk?
 - Describe the product you purchase from them. Include product type and annual volume you purchase.
- What is the input volume of milk (including fluid milk, dairy components, and/or dairy mix) you utilize on an average processing day? Include the unit of volume

SECTION II. FULL APPLICATION

- Estimate the percentage of milk (which includes fluid milk, dairy components, and/or dairy mix) by volume that you use in your processing facility that is originally sourced from farmers located in the Northeast region
- Describe your business in terms of size (gross sales, number of employees, production type and volume), scope, markets, and number of years in business

ENTITY BACKGROUND

- Has your business/organization received any federal or state grant in the past 5 years?
- Have you or your project partners received any (federal, state, or other) grants **for this specific project** in the past 5 years? If yes:
 - List the grants received
 - Describe the work done under these grants
 - How will the work in this grant differ from and/or build upon that work?
- Have you applied for, or do you plan to apply for, other grant(s) in conjunction with this grant? *Leveraging other funds to complete this project is encouraged.* If yes:
 - Please list the other grants you will apply for/have applied for in conjunction with this grant
- Has your business/organization ever been unable to complete or adhere to granting requirements for a grant you were awarded? If yes:
 - Describe the circumstances that prevented you from completing/adhering to the requirements of your grant(s).
- Will you be using loans to supplement this application?
- Describe why you and your staff are qualified to complete this project, as proposed
- Rate your business's experience in implementing similar past work/projects related to processing expansion. *(Select from dropdown: significant experience, some experience, no experience)*
- Do you currently work with a farm business planner to support the financial health and future planning for your business? If so, enter their name and organization.
- Have you received technical assistance in the preparation of this project, or do you plan to receive related technical assistance during the course of this grant project? If so, list name and organization.

PROJECT DESCRIPTION

PROJECT OVERVIEW

- Summarize your project in a couple of sentences.
- Provide a detailed project description which comprehensively describes your vision of this project. Describe the 1) issues you plan to address and why they are relevant and important, 2)

SECTION II. FULL APPLICATION

goals for the project, 3) outline of activities you would like to include, 4) opportunities that you see for partnership, and 5) desired outcomes. Include any background or context, as needed

- Identify 2 or more funding priorities, as defined in the RFA, that your project addresses and provide an explanation of how your project aligns. *Please list the funding priority (as written in the RFA) that you are addressing, followed by your explanation.*
- Why is it necessary for your business to make these investments? What would be the impacts of not receiving this funding?
- Will this project increase the volume of regionally sourced fluid milk, dairy components, or dairy mix that your business processes? If yes:
 - Estimate the percent increase of Northeast regionally produced fluid milk, dairy components, or dairy mix volume you expect to source
- Provide the number of Northeast farmers that are expected to directly benefit from this project
- Will this project directly benefit farmers located outside of the Northeast region? If yes:
 - Provide the number of farmers outside the Northeast region that are expected to directly benefit from this project
- How will this project impact farms and processor businesses from which you source milk? Include expected changes in number of sources, volume from existing sources, and/or price premiums
- Describe any other expected supply chain or regional impacts of this project
- How do you know that the market can absorb an increase in your production? Describe your sales strategy and how you will market the additional volume of product that results from this grant project
- Describe both the positive and negative impacts of this project on your workforce, labor efficiencies, and safety impacts to employees
- Describe your plan to appropriately install any new equipment or machinery and train staff on it
- Do you expect to see cost or energy savings as a result of this project? If yes:
 - Provide information about your anticipated cost savings or energy savings
- What long-term impacts do you anticipate on your business due to this project and what will success look like?
- What challenges do you anticipate and how do you plan to adapt to them?
- How do you plan to sustain the activities implemented through this project beyond the grant period?

SUPPORTING INFORMATION

PROJECT PARTNERS

- List all the anticipated partners for this project. Provide partner name; title; business/organization; sector; description of role; whether they have committed to partnering.

SECTION II. FULL APPLICATION

WORKPLAN

Provide a detailed list of all major activities that will take place during this project and their associated deliverables and timeframes. Include at least 5 key project activities. For each activity:

- Detailed description of the activity
- Description of the deliverables you will be able to show in your reporting to demonstrate this activity has been successful
- Estimated timeframe and/or date of completion of the key activity

LETTERS OF COMMITMENT OR SUPPORT

At least two letters of commitment and/or support are required for this application.

Letters of Commitment should articulate project partners' involvement and identify the contributions they will make to ensure the project's success. Match contributors should describe and assign value to their match commitment (including financial or in-kind support).

Letter(s) of commitment are **required** from any match contributors that are outside of the applicant's business. If there are no match sources outside the applicant's business, the applicant is exempt from this requirement.

Letters of Support should articulate general support from other organizations/businesses and should describe the benefits of the project both for the applicant business and the greater dairy sector or community at large.

It is **strongly encouraged** to include at least one letter of support from a current or new distributor, retailer, wholesaler, or other sales outlet, indicating they will be able to market increased production.

Additional letters will increase the competitiveness of the application. Letters may be uploaded as a single document or individually.

SUPPORTING DOCUMENTATION

The applicant should include any additional information that shows the impacts of this grant such as evidence of cost or energy savings, impact on business viability, quotes for work included in the proposed activities, or other relevant information about the business/organization or the project.

Quotes or bids are **required** for all specialized equipment purchases and installation services covered by grant funds.

To further increase the competitiveness of your application, upload any documentation that shows the development of the project idea, partnerships, funding received, and/or the viability of your business.

Examples can include but are not limited to: previous work that this project will build upon, evidence of marketplace demand, bids, or other documentation that provides further context for your proposed project.

Documentation can be uploaded as one document or individually.

EXPECTED OUTCOMES & IMPACTS

EXPECTED OUTCOMES & IMPACTS

- Describe the current stage of this project
- Describe the stage do you intend to reach by the end of this grant
- Estimate the number of non-dairy businesses/organizations that will benefit from this project
- Describe the intended supply chain-level impacts of this project
- What is the percent increase in sales that you anticipate from these grant activities for your business?
- How many new or existing outlets do you expect consumers to use to buy your business's dairy products for each of the categories below? If not applicable to your business/organization, enter zero (0).
 - Number of farmers markets
 - Number of grocery stores
 - Number of wholesale markets
 - Other outlets
 - If other outlets, please list
- As a result of this grant, do you expect an increase in revenue for your business/organization?
 - Please estimate the increase in revenue (in \$)
- How many jobs are expected to be maintained because of this grant project?
- How many jobs are expected to be created because of this grant project?
- Describe how you will evaluate the success of your project, including metrics you will track to show your progress

ANTICIPATED PROJECT INCOME

Any program income generated during the grant period must be used to further the objectives of the grant project. Program income includes, but is not limited to: income from fees for services performed; the sale of commodities or items fabricated under an award (this includes items sold at cost if the cost of producing the item was funded in whole or partially with grant funds); and registration fees for conferences, workshops, events, etc.

Recipients are not required to report program income earned after the grant period.

- Do you anticipate having any program income? If yes:
 - List any anticipated sources of incomes generated by the activities covered by this grant
 - How much income is expected to be earned by those activities (in \$)?
 - Describe how you will reinvest the program income into the project to enhance the education, promotion, or consumption of Northeast-regionally produced dairy products

BUDGET

Please complete the following budget table, listing all grant requests and match contributions. Totals will appear once the grid has been saved.

- **Allowable Costs:** At least 75% of all requested grant funds must be used for the purchase and installation of pre-approved specialized equipment and supplies. Please refer to the Eligibility section above for a full list of pre-approved equipment. Grant funds requested must align with the allowable costs detailed in the *2021 AMS Terms and Conditions* (see 8.0 Allowable Costs and Activities).
- **Match Contributions:** Projects must demonstrate matching funds of at least 25% as cash and/or in-kind sources. (E.g. \$100,000 of requested funds requires at least \$25,000 in match contributions.)
 - Do not need to adhere to AMS allowable costs.
 - Match contributions are not required to reflect 25% per expense line, but they must make up 25% of the total grant ask. (For example, a grant request for \$70,000 in supplies and \$50,000 in personnel could be matched with \$60,000 of equipment.)

Refer to the Eligibility section above for more details, including match and budget examples.

EXAMPLE OF AN ELIGIBLE BUDGET

Expense Category	Grant Funds Requested	Applicant Contribution - Cash Match	Applicant Contribution - In-kind Match	Project Total
Specialized Equipment	\$80,000.00	\$12,000.00	\$0.00	\$92,000.00
Supplies	\$13,000.00	\$6,000.00	\$0.00	\$19,000.00
Contractual/Consultant	\$0.00	\$3,000.00	\$0.00	\$3,000.00
Training	\$2,000.00	\$0.00	\$0.00	\$2,000.00
Travel	\$0.00	\$0.00	\$0.00	\$0.00
Personnel	\$0.00	\$1,500.00	\$0.00	\$1,500.00
Fringe	\$0.00	\$0.00	\$0.00	\$0.00
Other	\$5,000.00	\$1,500.00	\$1,700.00	\$13,000.00
TOTALS	\$100,000.00	\$24,000.00	\$1,700.00	\$125,700.00

BUDGET NARRATIVE

The budget narrative should reflect what you have outlined in your budget table. Please ensure that values associated with the following questions align with your budget table.

- Total funds requested? *For applicants to Tier 3, grant fund requests must be \$25,000 – \$250,000.*
- Amount of matching funds? *25% cash and/or in-kind match is required for this grant.*

SECTION II. FULL APPLICATION

- List each 1) match source, 2) each contribution amount (and specify if it is cash or in-kind), and 3) describe how the contribution will be used to accomplish your project activities. *Outside match contributors are required to provide a letter of commitment.*
- Are all matching funds/contributions committed at this time?
 - If not, provide the sources and timeline/plan for securing these commitments
- Are you requesting a match waiver for this grant? If so, describe why you need a match waiver accommodation. *While match waivers will be considered, applicants are encouraged to leverage other grants or low-interest loans to supplement this project.*

Complete the following questions **only for expenses that are covered by grant funds** (not matching funds, which should be detailed in questions above). Please thoroughly describe each category for which you are requesting grant funds, answering all parts of each question.

- Are 'Personnel' expenses included in the 'Grant Funds Requested' column of your above budget? *Personnel costs are for owners or staff time directly related to the grant project.*
 - Personnel: for each individual whose time can be directly attributed to grant activities, provide 1) individual's title and role, 2) hourly rate, 3) expected number of hours, 4) grant funds requested
- Are 'Fringe Benefit' expenses included in the 'Grant Funds Requested' column of your above budget? If yes:
 - Fringe Benefits: for each of the project's salaried employees, provide the 1) fringe benefit rate and 2) grant funds requested.
- Are 'Training' expenses included in the 'Grant Funds Requested' column of your above budget? If yes:
 - Training: for each training, provide 1) description, 2) estimated cost, and 3) justification for how the expense is necessary for the success of this project
- Are 'Contractual/Consultant' expenses included in the 'Grant Funds Requested' column of your above budget? *Note that multiple bids may be required. Refer to Allowable Costs in the AMS Terms and Conditions.* If yes:
 - Contractual/Consultant: List each anticipated contractor/consultant. For each, provide: 1) hourly/flat rate, 2) grant funds requested, 3) detailed description of services, and 4) justification for why the services are necessary for the success of this project.
- Are 'Supply' expenses included in the 'Grant Funds Requested' column of your above budget? *Supplies include materials, supplies, and fabricated parts costing less than \$5,000 per unit.* If yes:
 - Supplies: List each supply (with a description if needed). For each, provide: 1) per unit cost, 2) # units purchased, 3) grant funds requested, and 4) justification for how this supply is necessary for the success of this project
- Are 'Equipment' expenses included in the 'Grant Funds Requested' column of your above budget? *Includes rental equipment or purchase of specialized equipment needed for grant activities. Items costing less than \$5,000 per unit are Supplies.* If yes:
 - Equipment: List each piece of equipment (with description if needed) and for each, indicate: 1) grant funds requested per piece, and 2) justification for how this equipment is necessary for the success of this project.

SECTION II. FULL APPLICATION

- Are 'Travel' expenses included in the 'Grant Funds Requested' column of your above budget? *Such as travel to pick up equipment. Please refer to Allowable Costs in the AMS Terms and Conditions for details.*
 - Travel: For each trip: 1) list expense types (airfare, car rental, hotel, meals, mileage, etc.) and associated grant funds requested, 2) number of travelers, and 3) justification for how this travel is necessary for the success of this project.
- Are 'Other' expenses included in the 'Grant Funds Requested' column of your above budget? *E.g. shipping costs, meetings/conferences, communications/marketing, rental expenses, ads, publication costs.* If yes:
 - Other: Include any expenses not covered in any of the previous budget categories. Be sure to break down costs into cost/unit and provide justification for how the expense is necessary for the success of this project.

III. SCORING CRITERIA

Scoring criteria for application review will be available before the application opens on April 13, 2023.

IV. GRANT MANAGEMENT & REPORTING

GRANT AGREEMENT & PAYMENT

Prior to receiving funding, successful applicants must sign a grant agreement with the Northeast Dairy Business Innovation Center via Vermont Agency of Agriculture, Food & Markets (VAAFAM) indicating their intent to complete the proposed project and authorizing NE-DBIC/VAAFAM to monitor the project's progress. The grant agreement will include provisions (terms and conditions) set by the State of Vermont as well as any program-specific requirements. Review [Attachment C - Standard State Provisions and Contracts and Grants](#) (12/15/2017 Revised).

Prior to commencement of work and release of any payments, grantee will be required to submit:

- A. A certificate of insurance consistent with the requirements set forth in Attachment C of the grant agreement. [Not required if grantee has a current certificate of insurance on file with the Agency of Agriculture.]
- B. A current [IRS Form W-9](#) (Request for Taxpayer Identification Number and Certification), signed within the past six months
- C. A Unique Entity Identifier (UEI) number, acquired through SAM.gov
- D. Documentation verifying pledged matching funds, as applicable.

GRANTEE PAYMENT SCHEDULE

Unless other arrangements are made with the grant manager, payments will be made on the following schedule:

- **Initial payment: 60%** of the total grant will be paid to the grantee upon receipt of certificate of insurance and Form W-9, confirmation of Unique Entity Identifier (UEI) via SAM.gov, and a claim submission in WebGrants. Failure to submit all required documents and an executed copy of the grant agreement within 30 days of receipt may result in the loss of awarded funds.
- **Second payment: 20%** of the total grant will be issued upon approval of grantee's interim performance report by the grant manager and receipt of a claim in WebGrants.
- **Final payment: 20%** of the total grant will be issued upon approval of grantee's final performance report, the completion and submission of a survey provided by the grant manager, and receipt of a claim in WebGrants.

The final performance report is due no later than 30 days after the grant end date. Final invoices must be submitted to the State within 45 days of the grant expiration date. Invoices submitted before the completion of an interim or final report will not be paid until the report has been received, reviewed, and accepted by the grant manager. The State cannot reimburse the grantee for work performed after the expiration date of the grant.

REPORTING REQUIREMENTS

The following reporting is required under this grant program:

1. Grantees will submit an Interim Performance Report mid-project which may include but is not limited to:
 - a. Summary of status of grant activities
 - b. Description of successes and challenges
 - c. Discussion of any modifications deemed necessary and justification for changes
 - d. Documentation of any marketing/promotion of project
 - e. Photos/documentation that demonstrates grant activities
 - f. Expenditures to date
2. Grantees will submit a Final Performance Report and complete a survey no later than thirty (30) days from the grant end date. Final reports may include but is not limited to:
 - a. Summary of achievements from this project including impacts on the community, public, and other businesses/organizations
 - b. Description of any challenges or changes to the project
 - c. Lessons learned from this project
 - d. Opportunities that arose from the completion of this project
 - e. Plans to build on the work completed under this grant
 - f. Representative documentation and photos representative of the full breadth of activities under this grant
 - g. Final grant and match expenditures
 - h. Project outcomes:
 - i. Number of project beneficiaries reached through this grant project
 - ii. Number of project beneficiaries that buy, sell, aggregate, store, produce or distribute dairy products
 - iii. Number of project beneficiaries that gained knowledge on how to access or produce dairy products
 - iv. Increases in sales
 - v. Increases in revenue
 - vi. Increases in dairy activities
 - vii. Increases in dairy production and/or innovative marketing strategies
 - viii. Number of jobs maintained/created
 - ix. Whether there were any new or beginning farmers that began producing dairy products due to this grant, and how many
 - x. Level of satisfaction/outlook for the future of your business before and after the grant
 - xi. If grantee is a farmer, which of the following did they experience?
 1. Reduced cost of production
 2. Increased lifestyle satisfaction
 3. Improved water quality
 4. Increased soil health

SECTION IV. GRANT MANAGEMENT & REPORTING

- xii. Number of the following outlets that were used to increase the public consumption of, and access to, dairy products because of this grant project: farmers markets, roadside stands, agritourism activities, grocery stores, wholesale markets, other markets.
- xiii. Results of grantee-provided measurements of success
- i. If grantee purchased special purpose equipment with grant funds, they must complete the following Federal forms with their final report:
 - i. Tangible Personal Property Report
 - ii. Supplemental Sheet
- j. Reporting on any program income generated by the grant activities.

The NE-DBIC/VAAFM reserves the right to utilize and/or summarize information and photos provided through these reports to use on publications/promotions.

NE-DBIC via VAAFM reserves the right to modify reporting requirements during the project. Information submitted in any report under this program will be a public record. Failure to adhere to reporting requirements and deadlines may disqualify the grantee from future grant opportunities through the NE-DBIC or State of Vermont.

CERTIFICATE OF INSURANCE

A certificate of insurance (COI) is a common requirement for businesses and organizations; most agents are familiar with it. The State of Vermont must be listed as an additional insured on the grantee's policy. We recommend forwarding the insurance requirements below to prospective insurers for accuracy:

Insurance: Before commencing work on this Agreement the Party must provide certificates of insurance to show that the following minimum coverages are in effect. It is the responsibility of the Party to maintain current certificates of insurance on file with the State through the term of this Agreement. No warranty is made that the coverages and limits listed herein are adequate to cover and protect the interests of the Party for the Party's operations. These are solely minimums that have been established to protect the interests of the State.

Workers Compensation: With respect to all operations performed, the Party shall carry workers' compensation insurance in accordance with the laws of the State of Vermont. Vermont will accept an out-of-state employer's workers' compensation coverage while operating in Vermont provided that the insurance carrier is licensed to write insurance in Vermont and an amendatory endorsement is added to the policy adding Vermont for coverage purposes. Otherwise, the party shall secure a Vermont workers' compensation policy, if necessary, to comply with Vermont law.

General Liability and Property Damage: With respect to all operations performed under this Agreement, the Party shall carry general liability insurance having all major divisions of coverage including, but not limited to:

Premises - Operations

Products and Completed Operations

Personal Injury Liability

Contractual Liability

The policy shall be on an occurrence form and limits shall not be less than:

SECTION IV. GRANT MANAGEMENT & REPORTING

\$1,000,000 Each Occurrence

\$2,000,000 General Aggregate

\$1,000,000 Products/Completed Operations Aggregate

\$1,000,000 Personal & Advertising Injury

Automotive Liability: The Party shall carry automotive liability insurance covering all motor vehicles, including hired and non-owned coverage, used in connection with the Agreement. Limits of coverage shall not be less than \$500,000 combined single limit. If performance of this Agreement involves construction, or the transport of persons or hazardous materials, limits of coverage shall not be less than \$1,000,000 combined single limit.

Additional Insured. The General Liability and Property Damage coverages required for performance of this Agreement shall include the State of Vermont and its agencies, departments, officers and employees as Additional Insureds. If performance of this Agreement involves construction, or the transport of persons or hazardous materials, then the required Automotive Liability coverage shall include the State of Vermont and its agencies, departments, officers and employees as Additional Insureds. Coverage shall be primary and non-contributory with any other insurance and self-insurance.

Notice of Cancellation or Change. There shall be no cancellation, change, potential exhaustion of aggregate limits or non-renewal of insurance coverage(s) without thirty (30) days written prior written notice to the State.