

VERMONT AGENCY OF AGRICULTURE, FOOD & MARKETS

LOCAL FOOD PURCHASE

ASSISTANCE GRANT

REQUEST FOR APPLICATIONS – FISCAL YEAR 2023

The Vermont Agency of Agriculture, Food & Markets requests applications for subawards from a USDA Local Food Purchase Assistance cooperative agreement to strengthen farm and food producers’ economic viability and enhance food security throughout Vermont. This community-based food security program will provide grants to Vermont farms, food producers, and organizations to purchase food from socially disadvantaged farmers and producers and distribute food to underserved communities.

KEY DATES

PUBLICATION DATE: October 24, 2022

APPLICATION OPENS: November 7, 2022

APPLICANT WEBINAR: November 7, 2022 at 2:00 PM

APPLICATION DEADLINE: December 12, 2022 at 2:00 PM

AWARD NOTIFICATION: February 2023

CONTENTS

VERMONT AGENCY OF AGRICULTURE, FOOD & MARKETS	1
KEY DATES.....	1
CONTACT INFORMATION.....	2
WEBGRANTS.....	2
SECTION 1: OVERVIEW & ELIGIBILITY.....	3
SECTION 2: APPLICATION	7
SECTION 4: APPLICATION SCORING CRITERIA.....	10
SECTION 5: GRANT MANAGEMENT & REPORTING.....	11
APPENDIX A: Definitions.....	16

CONTACT INFORMATION

PROGRAM QUESTIONS

Julia Scheier

Julia.Scheier@vermont.gov

802-522-7042

WEBGRANTS TECHNICAL ASSISTANCE

Melissa Moon

Melissa.Moon@vermont.gov

802-622-4128 cell

Agency of Agriculture, Food & Markets staff are available to assist applications during State of Vermont business hours, Monday–Friday, 7:45 AM to 4:30 PM. Please note that immediate assistance may not be available shortly before deadlines.

WEBGRANTS

Applications for this program are accepted through the [WebGrants](#) grants management system.

REGISTRATION

New users must complete the [WebGrants Registration Form](#). Registrations are typically processed within two business days. Please register for an account well in advance of the application deadline.

SUBMISSION POLICY

It is the applicant's responsibility to follow all application instructions including the submission dates and times included in this request for applications (RFA). The Vermont Agency of Agriculture, Food & Markets (VAAFMM) will accept the last validated submission through the grants management system, WebGrants, prior to the posted deadline as the final and sole acceptable submission of an application.

We cannot accept submission or re-submission of incomplete or delayed applications after the posted deadline, barring exceptional circumstances. WebGrants will prevent applications from being submitted after the posted deadline.

SUBMISSION CONFIRMATION

When you have successfully submitted your application, you will be redirected to an **Application Submitted Confirmation** page with an Application ID number. You will also receive a confirmation email.

SECTION 1: OVERVIEW & ELIGIBILITY

PROGRAM PURPOSE

The Vermont Local Food Purchase Assistance Program (LFPA) is designed to improve local food access while supporting socially disadvantaged farmers and food producers. This competitive grant program seeks applications from farms, food producers, and organizations that will utilize funding to procure Vermont food and distribute it to underserved communities at no cost. Funds must be used to start new projects or expand existing offerings; grant funds cannot be used to take the place of current activities or funding.

DEFINITIONS

The following definitions are provided by the United States Department of Agriculture (USDA) for use in the Local Food Purchase Assistance (LFPA) Program.

Socially disadvantaged farmer or producers. A Socially Disadvantaged Farmer or Rancher is a farmer or rancher who is a member of a Socially Disadvantaged Group. A Socially Disadvantaged Group is a group whose members have been subject to discrimination on the basis of race, color, national origin, age, disability, and, where applicable, sex, marital status, familial status, parental status, religion, sexual orientation, genetic information, political beliefs, reprisal, or because all or a part of an individual's income is derived from any public assistance program.

Underserved communities are those defined in accordance with Exec Order 13985, Executive Order on Advancing Racial Equity and Support for Underserved Communities Through the Federal Government, Jan 20, 2021:

Sec. 2. Definitions. For purposes of this order: (a) The term “equity” means the consistent and systematic fair, just, and impartial treatment of all individuals, including individuals who belong to underserved communities that have been denied such treatment, such as Black, Latino, and Indigenous and Native American persons, Asian Americans and Pacific Islanders and other persons of color; members of religious minorities; lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender, and queer (LGBTQ+) persons; persons with disabilities; persons who live in rural areas; and persons otherwise adversely affected by persistent poverty or inequality.

(b) The term “underserved communities” refers to populations sharing a particular characteristic, as well as geographic communities, that have been systematically denied a full opportunity to participate in aspects of economic, social, and civic life, as exemplified by the list in the preceding definition of “equity.”

AVAILABLE FUNDS

Approximately \$200,000 is available through this program.

MINIMUM & MAXIMUM AWARD

There is no minimum or maximum award. Grant requests must be commensurate with the proposed project.

MATCH REQUIREMENT

There is **no match requirement** for this funding opportunity. However, if the proposed project's budget exceeds the allocated amount from this grant, the applicant must prove sufficient funds are available and list funding sources for the entire project.

PROJECT LENGTH

Projects are expected to run from March 2023 through March 2024 for a total of 13 months.

FUNDING SOURCE

In 2022, U.S. Department of Agriculture Agricultural Marketing Service awarded a [Local Food Purchase Assistance](#) cooperative agreement to state governments and federally recognized tribal governments. In Vermont, the Agency of Agriculture, Food & Markets (VAAFMM) will administer these funds to support socially disadvantaged farmers and producers and improve local food access. The Local Food Purchase Assistance Grant will subaward funding to farms, food producers, and organizations to offer free food to underserved communities.

ELIGIBILITY

Vermont farmers and food producers are eligible to apply. Socially disadvantaged farmers and producers will receive priority for funding.

Organizations with the capability to purchase food from socially disadvantaged Vermont farmers and producers and distribute food to underserved communities are eligible to apply.

INELIGIBLE APPLICANTS

Entities that are receiving funding under the LFPA subawards beginning in fall 2022 are ineligible to apply.

ELIGIBLE PROJECTS

Projects must purchase local food products and distribute at no cost to community members. These purchases must be primarily from socially disadvantaged Vermont farmers or producers and must be primarily distributed to underserved communities.

Projects must be new or an expansion of existing offerings; funds cannot pay for preexisting food distribution projects.

Additionally, projects cannot require a formal subscription; a sign-up process for informational and planning purposes is allowable.

Examples of eligible projects include the following:

- A farm starting or expanding a free seasonal or year-round CSA share for underserved community members
- A farm expanding their CSA offerings by partnering with a local nonprofit to support distribution and outreach to an underserved community
- A food hub expanding a distribution program that provides food to an increased number of underserved community members
- A nonprofit starting a weekly distribution of local products purchased from multiple socially disadvantaged farmers to underserved community members
- A hospital expanding a health care share model of distributing product purchased from socially disadvantaged farmers to more underserved community members, provided there is no subscription requirement

INELIGIBLE PROJECTS

Projects that do not primarily fund direct food purchases are ineligible for this funding.

Examples of ineligible projects include the following:

- Funding an existing program or supplanting current funding for an existing program
- The purchase of a vehicle for food distribution or other large equipment
- Funding a project that does not purchase food directly from a majority of socially disadvantaged growers/producers
- Funding a program that does not serve a majority of underserved community members
- Funding a project that requires a formal subscription (A sign-up process to determine interest for planning purposes is allowable.)

ELIGIBLE EXPENSES

At least 50% of project funds must be spent on local food purchases.

At least 50% of local food purchases must be from farmers/producers/ranchers who meet the federal definition of socially disadvantaged farmer or producer. For example, if a total budget is \$10,000 and you plan to spend \$8,000 on food purchases, then at least \$4,000 of those purchases would need to be from socially disadvantaged farmers/producers.

At least 50% of project beneficiaries must meet USDA's definition of underserved community members.

Eligible expenses may include:

- Direct purchases of local food
- Direct costs for outreach, program development, and program administration
- Direct costs for food storage and distribution expenses

- Personnel and fringe benefits for staff time that directly supports this project
- Supplies (valued at less than \$5,000 each) that directly support this project
- Indirect costs (business expenses not directly related to the project, such as office overhead or utilities)

INELIGIBLE EXPENSES

Ineligible expenses include:

- Purchases of food from outside of Vermont
- Purchase of live animals or processing costs
- Equipment valued at over \$5,000
- Personnel time or supplies that do not directly support the project
- Other costs as outlined in the Federal Cost Principles ([Subpart E-Cost Principles of 2 CFR Part 200](#)) for complete explanations of the allowability of costs.

KEY DATES AND DEADLINES

October 24, 2022	Request for Applications (RFA) published
November 7, 2022	Application opens
November 7, 2022 at 2:00 PM	Information Session Webinar Register here
December 12, 2022 at 2:00 PM	Application closes
February 2023	Awards announced
March 2023	Projects start
October 2023	Interim Performance Report
March 2024	Projects end
Quarterly during grant period	Progress Report Due
Annually during grant period	State annual report due (45 days after end of applicant's fiscal year)

SECTION 2: APPLICATION

HOW TO APPLY

Applications are accepted through the Vermont Agency of Agriculture Food & Markets' grants management system, [WebGrants](#), at agriculturegrants.vermont.gov.

For a complete guide on how to apply using WebGrants, review the [WebGrants Application Guide](#) at agriculture.vermont.gov/grants/howtoapply.

REGISTRATION

New users must complete the [WebGrants Registration Form](#) at agriculturegrants.vermont.gov/register.do. Registrations are typically processed within two business days. Please register for an account well in advance of the application deadline.

INFORMATION SESSION WEBINAR

VAAFAM staff will offer an informational webinar on this grant program, the application process, and using WebGrants on November 7, 2022 at 2:00 PM. Register [here](#).

APPLICATION COMPONENTS

Be prepared to enter the following information in the online application.

SECTION 1: APPLICANT INFORMATION

- Applicant name
- Business or Organization
- **Unique Entity Identifier (UEI)** – please note that the process to obtain a UEI can take several weeks. If you are in the process of obtaining a UEI, that is sufficient for your application and we will require you to have a UEI before we execute the grant. You do not need to have an active SAM.gov registration.
- Mailing Address
- Phone Number
- Email address
- Applicant type (farm or organization)
- What does your business/organization do?
 - If a farm, please explain what you currently grow, raise, or produce and what your current markets are.
 - If applying as a nonprofit, please explain the mission of the organization and what Vermont counties your organization serves.
- Years in operation
- Total number of employees (If possible, indicate how many are full time or part time.)

- Has your business/organization ever received a grant from the Vermont Agency of Agriculture, Food & Markets? If yes, please list all grants and the years in which they were received.
- Where did you learn about this grant opportunity?

SECTION 2: PROJECT INFORMATION

- Grant funds requested (\$)
- Project title (15 words or fewer)
- Provide estimated start and end dates. The default estimated start date is March 2023, and the end date can be no later than March 2024.
- Provide a very brief description of your project (1–2 sentences)
- Provide a detailed project plan, including a timeline.
- What is your plan to distribute food?
- Approximately how many pounds of food will you distribute throughout the grant period?
- Have you identified a need for this food in your community? If so, how has need been identified?
- If this proposed project will expand a current project or program, explain how you will ensure that this project will be for expanded offerings and not be used to pay for work already happening.
- Who will oversee this project?
- Do you have experience in implementing a similar project? If so, please explain.
- How many farmers or producers will provide food for this project?
- Of that amount, how many meet USDA’s definition of socially disadvantaged?
- How will you connect with farmers or producers you will purchase from?
- How many people do you anticipate will receive food through this proposal?
- Of that amount, how many qualify as members of an underserved community based on USDA’s definition?
- How will you connect with individuals to distribute this food? Describe the process through which people will hear about, sign up, and become recipients of this food.
- Will this work create new relationships or expand markets? This could be a connection between a farm and new community members or between an organization and new producers, or an organization and new outlets for food distribution? If so, please explain.
- What will happen to this project once the project period is over?

SECTION 3: BUDGET PROPOSAL

Provide a budget that covers the entire cost of the project. Please remember that at least 50% of funds must be spent on direct food purchases. Note there is NO match requirement, but if the proposed project’s budget exceeds the awarded amount from this grant, please indicate the match amount and source.

Expense Category	Funds Requested	Match (if applicable)	Match Source (if applicable)	Total
Food purchases				
Salaries/Wages				
Supplies				
Other				
Total				

SECTION 4: BUDGET NARRATIVE

Please explain each line item in detail, including estimates for food procurement, rate for staff, etc.

SECTION 4: APPLICATION SCORING CRITERIA

APPLICATION SCORING

A review committee will consider the following when evaluating applications:

Criteria	Points
<p>Alignment with Project Goals</p> <p>Proposed project aligns with the priority goals of the LFPA program</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Supporting socially disadvantaged farmers and producers • Expanding access to local, healthy, and fresh foods to underserved community members 	30
<p>Project Proposal</p> <p>Project proposal is well developed and clearly states how food will be distributed.</p> <p>Project will positively impact local food access and meet a community need.</p>	30
<p>Capacity and Need</p> <p>Applicant demonstrates the capacity to complete the project outlined.</p> <p>Applicant demonstrates a need for this project.</p>	20
<p>Budget</p> <p>The budget proposal is reasonable given the project outlined.</p> <p>The number of project beneficiaries is commensurate with the amount of funds requested.</p>	20

SECTION 5: GRANT MANAGEMENT & REPORTING

GRANT AGREEMENT

Prior to receiving funding, successful applicants must sign a grant agreement with the Vermont Agency of Agriculture, Food & Markets (VAAFAM) indicating their intent to complete the proposed project and authorizing 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) at bgs.vermont.gov/purchasing-contracting/forms for the most recent State of Vermont provisions.

Prior to commencement of work and release of any payments, grantee must submit:

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] See below for more information about the Certificate of Insurance.

A current **IRS Form W-9** (Request for Taxpayer Identification Number and Certification), signed within the past six months [Not required if grantee is already a state vendor]. This must be hand signed and dated in ink.

Note that receiving a UEI on SAM.gov can take several weeks. Please plan on requesting a UEI or confirming your existing UEI as soon as you receive notice of a grant award if not before. There is no cost to request a UEI on SAM.gov.

GRANTEE PAYMENT SCHEDULE

- Upon receipt of certificate of insurance and Form W-9, confirmation of UEI number, and claim submission in WebGrants, grantees receive an initial payment equal to not more than 45% of the total grant. 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.
- A second payment equal to not more than 45% of the total grant will be issued upon approval by the grant manager of grantee's summer quarterly report due October 15, 2023 and receipt of a claim in WebGrants. This claim must include an outline of expenditures to date. Grantees must spend at least 25% of total grant funds before receiving the second claim.
- A final payment equal to not more than 10% of the total grant will be issued as a reimbursement following grant manager approval of grantee's final performance report/final report due April 15, 2024 and claim in WebGrants. This claim must include an outline of all expenditures to date. Final invoices must be submitted to

the State within 45 days of the grant expiration date. The State cannot reimburse the grantee for work performed after the expiration date of the grant.

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:
 - \$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.

REPORTING REQUIREMENTS

If awarded funding, you will be expected to fill out a quarterly progress report. Grantee progress reports are required throughout the grant period. The grant coordinator will provide reporting templates. Reporting for this program includes, but is not limited, to the following.

Quarterly reports will be due on the following schedule for each year of the grant:

- January 1 – March 31: due April 15
- April 1 – June 30: due July 15
- July 1 – September 30: due October 15
- October 1 – December 31: due January 15

The information collected through these reports includes, but is not limited to:

- Name of farms/producers you have purchased from, and whether they are owned by socially disadvantaged farmers
- Addresses of farms/producers you have purchased from
- The type of food purchased from each farm/producer, and the value of those purchases
- The dollar value of product distributed to underserved communities.
- Name of distribution sites, and whether those distribution sites are in an underserved community
- Addresses of distribution sites
- Project expenditures to date
- Accomplishments/activities that occurred in the quarter
- Deviations from the proposed plan
- Difficulties encountered and solutions developed to overcome difficulties
- Major planned activities for the next quarter

The **quarterly report** due October 15, 2023 will also include a narrative addressing:

- Percentage of food that is distributed beyond your current network. Compare the number of new individuals you are serving versus ones you already served. What percentage of those contacts do you expect to maintain?
- Percentage of new marketing opportunities established by purchasing from local and regional farmers/producers, and of those, what percentage will likely be sustained after the funding is expended. (Compare the number of partnerships built through the LFPA grant to partnerships in existence prior to the program, and of those, the percentage that will continue at the conclusion of the program.)
- Percentage of new marketing opportunities established by purchasing from socially disadvantaged farmers/producers, and of those, what percentage will likely be sustained after the funding is expended. (Compare the number of partnerships built through the LFPA grant to partnerships in existence prior to the program, and of those, the percentage that will continue at the conclusion of the program.)
- Percentage of purchases distributed beyond current food distribution networks to serve underserved communities, and of those, what percentage will likely be sustained after the funding is expended. (Compare the total deliveries of food products through the LFPA grant to the deliveries made to underserved communities that are not served by current food distribution networks (such as TEFAP), and the percentage of those food distributions that will continue at the conclusion of the program.)

The **final quarterly report**, due April 15, 2024, will also include:

- Lessons learned from the project
- Opportunities that arose from the completion of the project
- Plans to build on the work completed under this grant
- Report out on all grant objectives
- 3–5 pictures of project implementation
- Percentage of food that is distributed beyond your current network. Compare the number of new individuals you are serving versus ones you already served. What percentage of those contacts do you expect to maintain?
- Percentage of new marketing opportunities established by purchasing from local and regional farmers/producers, and of those, what percentage will likely be sustained after the funding is expended. (Compare the number of partnerships built through the LFPA grant to partnerships in existence prior to the program, and of those, the percentage that will continue at the conclusion of the program)
- Percentage of new marketing opportunities established by purchasing from socially disadvantaged farmers/producers, and of those, what percentage will likely be sustained after the funding is expended. (Compare the number of partnerships built through the LFPA grant to partnerships in existence prior to the program, and of those, the percentage that will continue at the conclusion of the program)

- Percentage of purchases distributed beyond current food distribution networks to serve underserved communities, and of those, what percentage will likely be sustained after the funding is expended. (Compare the total deliveries of food products through the LFPA grant to the deliveries made to underserved communities that are not served by current food distribution networks (such as TEFAP), and the percentage of those food distributions that will continue at the conclusion of the program.)

State of Vermont Subrecipient Annual Report will be due within 45 days of the end of the grantee's fiscal year. This report will be requested by and should be submitted directly to the state office of Finance and Management. This is required for all grantees receiving Federally funded grants.

APPENDIX A: Definitions

Definitions are copied from the USDA AMS [LFPA Cooperative Agreement Program Request for Applications](#).

Socially Disadvantaged Farmer or Rancher is a farmer or rancher who is a member of a Socially Disadvantaged Group. A Socially Disadvantaged Group is a group whose members have been subject to discrimination on the basis of race, color, national origin, age, disability, and, where applicable, sex, marital status, familial status, parental status, religion, sexual orientation, genetic information, political beliefs, reprisal, or because all or a part of an individual's income is derived from any public assistance program.

Underserved communities are those defined in accordance with Exec Order 13985, Executive Order on Advancing Racial Equity and Support for Underserved Communities Through the Federal Government, Jan 20, 2021:

1. Sec. 2. Definitions. For purposes of this order: (a) The term “equity” means the consistent and systematic fair, just, and impartial treatment of all individuals, including individuals who belong to underserved communities that have been denied such treatment, such as Black, Latino, and Indigenous and Native American persons, Asian Americans and Pacific Islanders and other persons of color; members of religious minorities; lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender, and queer (LGBTQ+) persons; persons with disabilities; persons who live in rural areas; and persons otherwise adversely affected by persistent poverty or inequality.
2. (b) The term “underserved communities” refers to populations sharing a particular characteristic, as well as geographic communities, that have been systematically denied a full opportunity to participate in aspects of economic, social, and civic life, as exemplified by the list in the preceding definition of “equity.”