



# LOCAL FOOD IN YOUR COMMUNITY PROGRAM

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## FISCAL YEAR 2020 REQUEST FOR APPLICATIONS

### KEY DATES

RFA Released: Mid-May, 2020

Application Opens: June 1<sup>st</sup>, 2020

Application Deadline: June 30<sup>th</sup>, 2020 at 5:00PM

Application Notifications: Early July, 2020

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# I. PROGRAM OVERVIEW & FUNDING ELIGIBILITY

## QUICK FACTS

### PROGRAM PURPOSE

With this program, the Vermont Agency of Agriculture, Food and Markets (VAAFAM) aims to strengthen collaboration between communities and local producers as planning efforts evolve quickly in response to the many impacts of the COVID-19 pandemic. These grants will contribute to implementation of community-driven local food market models to increase points of access to fresh fruits and vegetables and support specialty crop producers through market development activities.

### AVAILABLE FUNDS & FUNDING SOURCE

The total amount of funds available for this grant cycle is \$25,000. Funding for this grant program was secured through the USDA Specialty Crop Block Grant Program (SCBGP).

### MINIMUM & MAXIMUM AWARD

The minimum award for this grant program is \$2,000. The maximum award is \$5,000.

### MATCH REQUIREMENT

Projects primarily benefiting specialty crop producers are not required to demonstrate matching funds, but may do so to better explain commitment from partners and full project scope. If more than 50% of the project will benefit non-specialty crop producers, applicants must demonstrate 50% matching funds in the form of cash or in-kind services.

*Specialty crops are defined in the Farm Bill as: fruits and tree nuts; vegetables; culinary herbs, spices, and medicinal plants; nursery, floriculture, horticulture, and Christmas trees; honey; hops; maple syrup; and mushrooms.*

### PROJECT LENGTH

Each successful grantee will have 60 days from the signing of their grant agreement to begin project work and submit all required materials with their 1<sup>st</sup> claim and 12 months to complete the full scope of the project and submit all required reporting and project deliverables, and final claim.

## FUNDING OPPORTUNITY DESCRIPTION

In 2019 the Vermont Agency of Agriculture, Food and Markets (VAAFAM) began working with the Vermont Department of Housing and Community Development and other partners to create the Better Places Program. The place-based economic development program is designed to enable Vermonters to deploy grassroots, quick-build, placemaking projects to improve the livability and vibrancy of their communities. Community-driven placemaking and health-promoting activities can build social capital through effective partnerships to help ensure that local food markets can thrive in the long term.

As that larger program continues to develop, and in response to the many impacts of the COVID-19 pandemic, priorities of this funding opportunity will support producers' efforts to adapt their operations and mitigate financial shock as much as possible. Projects should focus on ways to improve existing and

## SECTION I: PROGRAM OVERVIEW & FUNDING ELIGIBILITY

accelerate emerging market models that serve multiple farmers and increase food access in Vermont communities.

This community-oriented approach to market development will focus on projects that can increase exposure to local products, and specifically specialty crops, to an expanded consumer base. Funding may support infrastructure needs, emerging technologies, educational endeavors, and policy implementation. In addition to funding, awarded projects will have the opportunity to receive technical assistance from VAAF and other Farm to Plate Partners as needed.

Priority will be given to initiatives that implement sustainable practices, support financially viable businesses, highlight collaborative efforts, and foster meaningful community connections through food.

### ELIGIBILITY

#### ELIGIBLE APPLICANTS

Only proposals that address community food access and expand direct-to-consumer markets for Vermont specialty crop producers in Vermont will be considered. Expenditures will be limited to allowable costs under the SCBGP and projects must demonstrate how investments will help the municipality, non-profits, businesses, and/or community groups increase revenue, realize cost savings, or improve access to specialty crops.

- Partnering specialty crop producers, producer groups, or farmers markets
- Vermont municipalities, organizations, or community groups that will partner with and/or provide support to specialty crop producers, producer groups, or farmers markets

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#### ELIGIBLE PROJECTS

- Capital improvements or equipment purchases
- Technical support, project management, or design services
- Marketing or related education and outreach programs
- Innovative solutions to logistics and/or distribution
- Accounting or inventory tracking software or other technology
- Website improvements, sales platforms, or app development

#### INELIGIBLE PROJECTS

- Developing or expanding a community garden without a direct connection to community support for local agricultural producers
- Established festivals and entertainment series
- Vehicle purchases or land purchases
- Direct purchases of food
- Funding for purchases made prior to award notification

### MATCHING FUNDS

Projects solely benefiting specialty crop producers do not need to demonstrate matching funds. If more than 50% of the project will benefit non-specialty crop producers, applicants must demonstrate 50% matching funds in the form of cash or in-kind services. For example, a \$2,000 grant benefiting 2 vegetable and 3 meat producers would require the applicant to contribute at least \$1,000 in cash and/or in-kind match. Eligible match sources include applicant's own capital, outside investment capital, and/or grants from private or public sources. Match support can also come in the form of in-kind time and services related to the community food access activities and must be quantified at fair market value. Applicants can satisfy match requirements through a combination of cash and in-kind services. All matching funds must be directed to the same project for which the applicant is requesting grant funds.

### APPLICATION PROCESS

#### SUBMISSION POLICY

All applicants must register to create an account using VAAFM's online grants management system, [WebGrants](#). Completed PDF application forms must be saved and uploaded along with all other required information by close of business (5:00PM) on June 30<sup>th</sup>, 2020. When an application has successfully been submitted, the applicant will be redirected to an "Application Submitted Confirmation" page with an Application ID number and receive a confirmation email. See the [WebGrants Application Guide](#) for more information on how to apply.

*Note: If you or anyone from your organization have previously registered in WebGrants, please do not create another account. Contact [Melissa Moon](#), Grants & Contracts Specialist for assistance with retrieving login information.*

It is the applicant's responsibility to adhere to all application instructions including all deadlines included in this request for applications (RFA). The Vermont Agency of Agriculture, Food & Markets (VAAFM) 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. VAAFM will not accept submission or re-submission of incomplete or delayed applications after the posted deadline, barring exceptional circumstances.

### AWARD INFORMATION

Once award decisions have been made, applicants will receive an email notification from the grant program manager regarding the status of their application. Both successful and unsuccessful applicants will receive notification. Feedback about award decisions will be available upon request.

#### ADDITIONAL FUNDING OPPORTUNITIES & RESOURCES FOR BUSINESSES

VAAFM offers a menu of [funding opportunities](#) as well as [business planning and assistance](#) resources available to the Vermont agricultural community:

- Funding Opportunities: [agriculture.vermont.gov/grants](http://agriculture.vermont.gov/grants)
- Business Planning & Assistance: [agriculture.vermont.gov/businessdevelopment/planning](http://agriculture.vermont.gov/businessdevelopment/planning)

## **II. EVALUATION CRITERIA**

### **APPLICATION REVIEW**

Applications will be reviewed by an advisory panel which will include representatives from the Vermont Agency of Agriculture, Food, and Markets and the Vermont Farm to Plate Network. Successful applications will be chosen based upon the evaluation criteria as detailed in this RFA and scored, in part, based on the scoring criteria provided below. Applications must meet all RFA eligibility and submission requirements. Applications must adequately explain how grant funds will be used and have a realistic implementation timeline and can be completed within one year. Application adequately identifies all contingencies or permits that may be required.

### **SCORING CRITERIA**

#### **A. APPLICANT INFORMATION**

All required information is complete and accurate. *Up to 10 points.*

#### **B. PROJECT DESCRIPTION & BUDGET**

Project description is clear and demonstrates leveraging community resources. Budget is reasonable and where appropriate, leverages additional resources, including match (if required). *Up to 20 points.*

#### **C. OVERVIEW OF PROJECT PARTNERS**

Description is complete and includes all partners and their relationship to the project. *Up to 20 points.*

#### **D. PROJECT ACTIVITIES & TIMELINE**

Work plan is thorough and demonstrates an ability to meet all goals and required deliverables within the grant period. *Up to 10 points.*

#### **E. GOALS, PERFORMANCE MEASURES, AND EXPECTED OUTCOMES**

Application Includes strategies for community-based collaboration, increased food access, and tracking of local products. *Up to 20 points.*

#### **F. COMMUNICATION PLAN**

The application addresses the priorities of community outreach and engagement through a coherent and realistic communication plan. *Up to 10 points.*

#### **G. LETTER(S) OF SUPPORT**

At least one required letter of support is included demonstrating partner collaboration. *Up to 10 points.*

## III. GRANT MANAGEMENT & REPORTING

### GRANT AGREEMENT & PAYMENT

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](https://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. 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 [Not required if grantee is already a state vendor.]
- C. Confirmation of an active registration in the Federal System for Award Management (SAM) at <https://www.sam.gov>.
- D. Documentation verifying pledged matching funds, as applicable

### GRANTEE PAYMENT SCHEDULE

The Agency will provide 90% of funds upon the receipt of 1) a signed grant agreement and related documents; 2) the submission and approval of a claim with associated invoice in the WebGrants system; and 3) proof that the applicant has obtained any permits that may be required for their project, if applicable. The final 10% of funds will be provided after completion of the project, and when a final report, claim, and invoice have been submitted and approved in the WebGrants system.

The Agency reserves the right to deny your application if you fail to obtain the necessary permits within 60 days of your award notice. Only expenses incurred during the grant period are eligible for reimbursement. Project costs occurring prior to or after the end date of an executed grant are not eligible for reimbursement.

### 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*

## SECTION IV: APPLICATION

*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

Projects will be required to provide initial data and ongoing metrics as detailed within the project grant agreements. A specific approach to performance measurement will be determined on a project-by-project basis in coordination with project manager and with local capacity in mind. Project teams may be asked to present to and advise other communities working to implement similar projects.

Reporting requirements include:

1. Provide necessary materials for funds disbursement
2. Provide monthly updates via email on project progress to project manager
3. Provide necessary close-out materials after project is completed (report, photos, etc.)

Within 30 days of project completion, project applicant must submit before and after photo(s) of the project, a project close-out report, a final project budget using templates provided by VAAF, and a final claim. VAAF and its partners may use the photos and written stories in state-related marketing materials.

Once the final close-out materials are submitted and approved by the program manager, the project team will receive a signed letter stating that they have met all the requirements for the Cultivating Local Food Access Program. Information on expectations for future correspondence will also be provided.



## IV. APPLICATION

### A. APPLICANT INFORMATION

1. Farm/Business/Organization/Municipality Name:
2. Vermont Secretary of State Business ID:  
Confirm your active registration number at: <https://bizfilings.vermont.gov/online/BusinessInquire>
3. Mailing Address (including Zip and County):
4. Business/Landline Phone:
5. Primary Contact First and Last Name:
6. Primary Contact Email Address:
7. Primary Contact Cell Phone:
8. Secondary Contact First and Last Name:
9. Secondary Contact Email Address:
10. Secondary Contact Cell Number:
11. Have you ever received a grant from the Agency of Agriculture, Food & Markets?
12. Have you ever received a grant from any other State government entity for a related project?
13. Do you self-certify that you are in compliance with State regulations and in good standing with the State of Vermont.
14. DUNS number:  
*A DUNS number may be obtained from Dun & Bradstreet at 866-705-5711 or [fedgov.dnb.com/webform](http://fedgov.dnb.com/webform). There is no fee to obtain a DUNS number, but you must have a DUNS number to submit an application.*



## B. PROJECT DESCRIPTION & BUDGET

Project Title: (Provide a descriptive title in seven words or fewer)

Project description: (Describe the proposed community food access model and anticipated improvements achieved as a result of the project in 4-5 sentences)

Project budget narrative:

1. Demonstrate how the funds will be used.
2. Description of source of matching funds or in-kind services (if required as described in this RFA).
3. Please include additional information or documentation to further detail your project budget such as: sales quotes, photographs, written testimonies, marketing plans, etc.

## C. OVERVIEW OF PROJECT PARTNERS

Applications must include a list of partners and a basic description of:

1. The proposed agricultural businesses and/or specialty crop producer partners, including a brief history, products sold, acres in production and current market outlets.
2. A brief history of the community/organizational partners, services they provide, and relevant food access or market development experience.
3. How long these relationships have existed.
4. Estimate the % of the project focused on increasing revenue or cost savings for specialty crop producers/products or improving access to specialty crops.  
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## **D. PROJECT ACTIVITIES & TIMELINE**

Provide a timeline for the activities of this project. Each task should have an approximate start and completion date. All funds must be obligated, and project work must be started within 60 days and completed within 12 months from the time the grant agreement is finalized. Project applicants will be required to provide data about the project at key project milestones to be detailed within specific project grant agreements.

## E. GOALS, PERFORMANCE MEASURES, AND EXPECTED OUTCOMES

Explain how the project activities will allow the applicant and partners the applicant will work with to improve food access in the community. Goals and strategies for achieving community-based collaboration, project sustainability and tracking local product sales and consumption will directly impact project competitiveness.

Using at least 2 of the below project performance measures and outcomes, provide details of how your project goals and activities will meet expected outcomes.

1. The anticipated growth in the number of new community food access points and producer-customer relationships established.
2. The estimated increase in volume of specialty crops and other local food products purchased and/or consumed in your community in relation to this project in a typical year. *Ex. increase in X number of products/pounds are available at X number of shared food access points*
3. How the project will track the change in quantity and/or value of specialty crops and local food sales resulting from this project. *Ex. increase sales of X pounds and/or products per month*
4. Increased efficiency in aggregation, distribution or delivery time of specialty crops and other local products. *Ex. decrease by X time to distribute X amount of product or complete X number of deliveries*



## F. COMMUNICATION PLAN

Project applicants should conduct sufficient outreach and engagement activities within the community to determine community support for the project, establish project partners, and ensure that the project will complement and/or enhance other community food access efforts.

1. Describe how you are planning to engage with the community about your project:  
(Include project leads, partners, producers, etc.)

2. Describe the methods and frequency of outreach you will use:  
(For example, community forums, organization or community website or newsletter, TV, radio and/or local newspaper, social media updates)



## **G. LETTER(S) OF SUPPORT**

At least one letter of support is required from a producer, producer group, or farmers market, municipality, organization, or community group that will provide support to the applicant or be a partner in the work. Additional letters are welcome, but not required.

If an applicant does not own the building or land on which its project will take place, additional documentation will be required (a letter of support from the property owner, a lease or other use agreement in place). Please include any additional documents that can further detail your project budget such as quotes, photographs, written testimonies, business plans, etc.