Dairy Marketing & Branding Services Grant

2023 REQUEST FOR APPLICATIONS

The Northeast Dairy Business Innovation Center (NE-DBIC) announces the availability of funds through the Dairy Marketing and Branding Services Grant Program. This grant will provide funds grants for established value-added dairy processors and producer associations to access professional marketing and branding services to elevate value-added dairy businesses. Projects funded by this grant will increase the exposure and promotion of regionally produced dairy products guided by marketing/branding professionals. Funded projects will increase consumer awareness of products, develop market channels and distribution opportunities to increase product placement, support innovative strategies to increase consumption, and/or increase business revenues. Additionally, up to 25% of the grant funds may be used to implement the strategy and/or content developed by the contractor.

Licensed dairy processors and producer associations from the Northeast are invited to apply. The Northeast region, for the purposes of NE-DBIC programs, includes the following states: Connecticut, Delaware, Maine, Maryland, Massachusetts, New Hampshire, New Jersey, New York, Pennsylvania, Rhode Island, and Vermont.

KEY DATES

RFA Release Date: April 11, 2023

Application Opens: April 27, 2023

Application Deadline: June 8, 2023 at 2:00 PM ET

CONTENTS

CONTACT

PROGRAM QUESTIONS	**WEBGRANTS TECHNICAL ASSISTANCE**
Ali Boochever	Rebecca Brockett
Grants Coordinator	Grants & Contracts Administrator
Ali.Boochever@vermont.gov	Rebecca.Brockett@vermont.gov
(802) 261-5740	(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 (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.

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 (VAAFM), 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 $38.77 million to support projects in the Northeast region of the United States.

ELIGIBILITY SUMMARY

Licensed dairy processors and producer associations from the Northeast are invited to apply.

MINIMUM & MAXIMUM AWARD

Minimum: $10,000

Maximum: $50,000

Match: A 25% (cash or in-kind) match commitment is required.

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 40% of grant funds upfront, 40% of funds mid-project, and 20% of funds once the grant is complete.

TOTAL AVAILABLE FUNDS

$400,000

PROJECT LENGTH

Approximately 12 months.

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, 21DBIVT1004-00.

FUNDING OPPORTUNITY DESCRIPTION

BACKGROUND

The NE-DBIC's Dairy Marketing and Branding Services grant program serves to elevate established value-added dairy processor businesses and producer associations across the Northeast region of the United States. Projects funded by this grant will increase the exposure and promotion of regionally produced dairy products guided by marketing/branding professionals. Funded projects will increase consumer awareness of products, develop market channels and distribution opportunities to increase product placement, support innovative strategies to increase consumption, and/or increase business revenues.

Grant funds will prioritize the grantee hiring a professional marketing/branding contractor to develop strategy and/or content. Up to 25% of the grant funds may be used to implement the strategy and/or content developed by the contractor.

Applicants will be expected to use at least one Dairy Business Innovation Initiative resource (webinar/report) related to marketing or distributing dairy products to develop their grant project, detailed below.

ELIGIBILITY

ELIGIBLE APPLICANTS

Applicants eligible for these funds must fall into at least one of the following categories:

1. Dairy processors that transform raw milk sourced from the Northeast region into an edible product and are:
    a. 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
    b. headquartered or based in the Northeast.
2. Dairy producer association/dairy council[1] which represents and promotes dairy products and dairy businesses of the Northeast.

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

- Certificate of Insurance listing VAAFM as an additional insured

---

[1] For the purposes of this grant a producer association group, also known as a trade association, industry trade group, business association, sector association or industry body, is an organization that: 1) was founded, 2) is funded by businesses that operate in a specific industry related to the dairy industry. Associations receiving the majority of their funds from producer check-off dollars are not eligible.

- Current IRS Form W-9
- 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 may be significant delays**.

FUNDING PRIORITIES

Project approaches should address 1 – 3 of the following funding priority areas:

- Application demonstrates engagement with multiple potential contractors ahead of submission
- Project shows innovation in packaging type or market channels
- Project will show or support substantial online/digital engagement
- Project builds on or enhances previous marketing and branding efforts
- Application demonstrates a strategic and sustainable approach to business growth and positioning with clear long-term vision
- Projects will increase sales, revenue, and/or consumers reached
- Projects will elevate regional dairy businesses

ELIGIBLE PROJECTS

The NE-DBIC seeks to support value-added dairy businesses to professionalize their marketing and/or branding approach to new or expanded markets, either individually or through a producer association marketing on the behalf of a group of value-added dairy businesses. All projects must meet the following requirements:

1. BACKGROUND RESEARCH REQUIREMENTS

All applications must demonstrate that the applicant has used at least one Dairy Business Innovation Initiative (DBII) technical assistance resource in the development of the proposed project. Applicants are required to have integrated information from at least one of the following DBII resources in the development of this project:

- Dairy Processor Brand Strategy & Marketing Toolkit
- Strengthening Regional Dairy Distribution Report
- Goat & Sheep Dairy Market Research and Interactive Dashboard
- Market Intelligence: Dairy Export Opportunities and Import Displacement webinars through the Wisconsin Dairy Innovation Center.
- Webinars through the Wisconsin Dairy Innovation Center. Selection to choose from includes: Fine Tuning your Marketing Strategy, Social Media Marketing, Developing E-Commerce, Developing an Export Program, and more.

2. CONTRACTOR VS. IMPLEMENTATION REQUIREMENTS

Grant funds must prioritize professional marketing/branding services. Up to 25% of total grant fund may be used to implement those services.

1. **Professional Services:** At least 75% of the total grant amount must be used to contract for professional marketing/branding services that will develop or improve the dairy product position in the market. The selected professional service provider must be an individual or firm that specializes in marketing and/or branding services.
    a. No contractor should be selected ahead of notification of funding, although a Request for Proposal (RFP) may be released by the applicant and sent to at least three potential contractors. However, preliminary discussions, quotes, and/or bids from potential contractors to help develop the project scope is expected of applicants.
    b. If applicant is awarded, any individual(s) or firms(s) hired by the applicant must adhere to AMS 2021 Terms & Conditions, including alignment with contractor selection process and requirements around contractor rates. Reach out to the grant manager for this program to learn more.

2. **Implementation of Contractor's Deliverables:** If the applicant choses to include expenses directly related to the implementation of the content or strategies developed by the professional, they may claim up to 25% of the total requested grant funds for this. Match contributions to cover additional implementation may be used to reach match requirements.

3. ELIGIBLE PROFESSIONAL SERVICES

Eligible marketing services may include, but are not limited to, activities related to the following:
- Strategy and Planning:
    o Development of a marketing plan which may include market research, strategy and tactics, message development, market positioning, media, and/or paid advertising plan.
- Branding, Creative, and/or Design Services:
    o Design of logo, signage, advertisements, collateral design
    o Design of market-compliant labels, packaging
    o Brand style guide, templates
    o Data visualization or infographics
    o Event materials
    o Multimedia production such as video, radio, podcasts, PSAs
    o Development of marketing or branding for third-party e-commerce platforms.
- Digital Marketing and Web Development:
    o Digital content strategy
    o Web design, user experience, and design
    o Digital creative including interactive or display advertising
    o Digital marketing plan including tactics, content, templates, and channels
    o Social media content including development of copy, messaging, and creative
    o Development of an e-commerce strategy and platform, including search engine optimization (SEO)
    o Costs associated with developing, servicing, and updating consumer-facing websites

- Public Relations: Strategic communications and earned media outreach which may include working with a public relations organization on story pitching to reputable news sources or other strategic public relations events.
- Access to New Markets: Sales strategy for accessing new markets or securing new customers such as institutional, export, or wholesale market expansion.
- Analytics & Reporting: Digital analytics including monitoring, reporting, and search optimization.

4. ELIGIBLE IMPLEMENTATION COSTS

Implementation costs must be directly associated with the implementation of the strategies or content developed by the professional services paid for by the grant funds, with some exclusions.

Examples of covered implementation costs include, but are not limited to:

- Production and distribution costs of sell-sheets, brochures, catalogs, shelf-talkers, banners, posters, recipe cards, and related materials
- Production and distribution of press releases, press kits, and other materials and information directed at the media, trade, and consumers
- The cost of production and placement of advertisements in magazines, newspapers, posters, billboards, direct mail, transit, television, radio, and third-party websites
- Online marketing such as advertisement placement on social media and search engines
- In-store and food service promotions, consumer and trade demonstrations, shipment of promotional samples, temporary displays, and rental of temporary space for displays, such as end-of-aisle and gondola displays
- Costs associated with the production and printing of market-compliant labels to be used by December 31, 2024 and labor costs to attach or sticker
- Production and distribution of promotional/giveaway items
- Production of company uniforms
- Sample/initial packaging or label runs up to $1000 per SKU

Please note that projects may only include allowable costs/activities as outlined in the 2021 AMS Terms and Conditions (8.0 Allowable Costs and Activities).

5. REQUIRED PROJECT CRITERIA

Effective applications will address the following:

1. Applicant demonstrates they have conducted research and communicated with at least one potential contractor. Utilizing the input from potential professional marketing/branding contractor(s), they have developed a comprehensive understanding of the scale, focus, costs, and impacts that the proposed project will encompass. Applications that include contractor bids will be more competitive.
2. If funds will be used for the promotion of a single business's image, logo, or brand name (such as a rebrand, branding of packaging, logo development, etc.) there must be a reference to state

or regional benefit for the duration of the grant period. (E.g., language on packaging that states, "benefitting New England farmers")

3. If funds will be used for market research, applicant must demonstrate a plan for sharing the results with other relevant businesses.
4. Project will increase marketability of dairy product lines.
5. Project develops market channels and distribution opportunities to:
    a. increase product placement; and/or
    b. support innovative strategies to increase consumption; and/or
    c. increase business revenues.
6. Applicant can sustain the changes/improvements past the grant period.
7. Dairy Processor applicants (only) must:
    a. demonstrate a comprehensive understanding of the market positioning of their current product range covered by this grant project (e.g., how many units they sell in a given month, market outlets, flexibility of price points);
    b. demonstrate that the applicant is prepared to meet increased product demand that may arise from the services they utilize through this grant. They have the tools, staffing and resources necessary to quickly meet changes in demand.
8. Producer Association applicants (only) must:
    a. demonstrate how they will positively impact multiple dairy businesses and supply chain partners.

The NE-DBIC recognizes that scope of the contractor as well as actual implementation costs may change over the course of the project. Changes to the use of grant funds for implementation costs should be discussed with the grant manager as they develop and before funds are spent to ensure alignment with USDA-AMS allowed costs.

EXAMPLES: ELIGIBLE PROJECTS

*   Example #1: A new generation has recently transitioned into the ownership of a creamery which sources milk from several farms in their region. The new owners would like to rebrand and create momentum to engage in new markets, targeting high-end specialty markets. They hire a professional to rebrand their materials (logo, printed promotional materials, and signage), develop new packaging, and design a marketing plan for entering the specialty cheese market. They utilize implementation costs for the printing of the signage, sell sheets, and a sample run of new packaging.
*   Example #2: A processor with an established and successful regional brand is looking to expand their presence to a broader national market. They hire a firm to develop a third-party e-commerce platform strategy and related advertisement strategy and design.
*   Example #3: A long-time creamery has a loyal following but has seen newer processors in the area creating increased competition. They don't know how to create a marketing plan for their business. They hire professional services to help them create a marketing strategy and develop

some basic promotional materials to increase their competitiveness. They use implementation costs to pay for the production and distribution of a catalog and other promo materials.

- Example #4: A business owner had a friend build an e-commerce site to adapt to changing market channels during the Covid-19 pandemic. It worked for the short term, but they would like it to be a permanent e-commerce site, so they want to better align it with the rest of their website and brand. They hire a professional to assess their website and e-commerce site which focus on an evaluation of their website content, search engine optimization, structure and flow, and for services to build out the website to improve user experience and functionality.
- Example #5: A business owner has found success selling their product on-site and sees an opportunity to increase sales at grocery stores and other retailers. Business hires a professional to plan and implement marketing, social media, and newsletter development. Another contractor is hired to do a re-design of their product containers, shipping boxes, and marketing materials to reflect the business' image. The business uses implementation funds to print the first run of packaging, cards, brochures, sell sheets, and to place online, print, and radio ads.

INELIGIBLE PROJECTS

- Projects not benefitting Northeast dairy businesses
- Projects that seek to use funds to expand production, increase production efficiencies
- Projects that seek to hire/pay in-house marketing, branding, or sales positions
- Projects exclusively focused on export
- Costs associated with trade show display or attendance
- Costs associated with implementation of activities unrelated to those developed by the professional services paid for by this grant
- Implementation costs which include:
  - Travel expenses
  - Salaries, fringe benefits, indirect costs
  - Branded items solely to be used as giveaways

EXAMPLES: INELIGIBLE PROJECTS

- An on-farm processor applies for grant funds to cover personnel costs for solely in-house marketing and branding activities.
  - **What would make this eligible?** The business must engage marketing/branding professionals in a contract relationship. Any staff time can be captured in implementation costs or match commitment.
- A dairy processor that sources milk from several farms in the Northeast is switching to a new, innovative packaging material and wants to pay for the design of a new label for their brand.
  - **What would make this eligible?** The processor would be able to use funds for developing the label design if it incorporated messaging that shows it supports multiple area dairy businesses for the duration of the grant period.

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 $40,000, the applicant must demonstrate at least $10,000 in match. Matching funds may be contributed by the applicant or by another organization and must take place during the grant period. The 25% required match may be any combination of cash and in-kind funds in any expense category. The applicant can use other funds (state or loan, other non-Federal money) as a match to their DBI project as long as there is not any such restriction in the agreements for those funds. Other federal funds may not be used as match. Match contributions must fully utilized within the grant period.

Examples of cash match include funds in the bank, funds contributed by another organization, bank loans, applicant labor, and compensation of employees. Labor rates should be in line with current market rates. Applicants using cash match from other grant sources must ensure there is not a restriction in the agreement for using those funds to match federal dollars.

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	$0.00	$0.00	$0.00	$0.00
Supplies	$3,000.00	$6,000.00	$0.00	$9,000.00
Contractual/Consultant	$35,000.00	$3,000.00	$0.00	$38,000.00
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	$0.00	$1,500.00	$1,700.00	$3,200.00
TOTALS	**$40,000.00**	**$12,000.00**	**$1,700.00**	**$53,700.00**

LETTERS OF SUPPORT/COMMITMENT

At least one letter of commitment and/or support is required for this application.

Letter(s) 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). Letters of Commitment are **required** from any match contributors that are outside of the applicant's business.

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.

SUPPORTING DOCUMENTATION

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

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.

Bids or quotes from potential contractors are strongly encouraged and will make for more competitive applications.

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 27, 2023 – June 8, 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.

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 type (as applicable), 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.

KEY DATES

DATES MAY BE SUBJECT TO CHANGE

April 11, 2023	Request for Application (RFA) released
April 27, 2023	Application period opens
June 8, 2023 at 2:00 PM ET	Application closes
July 2023	Applicants notified of award status
August 1, 2023	Estimated grant start date
January 2024, date may depend on project	Interim report due
June 30, 2024	Project end date
July 30, 2024	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 transforms raw milk into an edible product and is in compliance with all required state and/or federal standards? If yes:
    1. Is the applicant headquartered or based in a Northeast state (CT, DE, MA, MD, ME, NH, NJ, NY, PA, RI, or VT)?
    2. Does the applicant's business source or produce milk that originates within the Northeast?
    3. Does the applicant's business manufacture dairy products within the Northeast?
    4. Is the applicant a licensed dairy operation in compliance with all required state and federal standards?
    5. Describe your business/organization operation in terms of size (gross sales, number of employees, production volume), markets, and number of years in business.
- Is the applicant from a dairy producer association that represents and promotes dairy products and dairy businesses of the Northeast? *For the purpose of this grant, a dairy producer association group, also known as a trade association, industry trade group, business association, sector association or industry body, is an organization founded and funded by businesses that operate in the dairy industry.* If yes:
    1. Describe your producer association, addressing: 1) founding members, 2) how association is funded, 3) industry scope covered by the association, and 4) association activities.
    2. If your association encompasses products other than dairy, describe how you will ensure that the project will benefit dairy only.
    3. Does this association receive funds from producer check-off dollars? What percent of the association's annual operating budget comes from producer check-off dollars?

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:
    1. List the grants received.
    2. Describe the work done under these grants.

3. 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? If yes:
    1. 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 so:
    1. 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 milk storage or handling improvements. *(Select from dropdown: significant experience, some experience, no experience)*
- Do you currently work with a 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 preparation of the project, or do you plan to receive related technical assistance during this grant project? If so, list name and organization.

PROJECT DESCRIPTION

Project Details
- Summarize your project in a couple of sentences.
- Describe your business/organization's previous and current marketing and branding efforts. Provide an explanation of why these grant funds are needed and how the project would or would not move forward without these funds.
- Provide a 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) goals for the project, and 3) desired outcomes. Include any background or context, as needed
- Identify 1-3 funding priorities, as defined in the RFA, that your project addresses and provide an explanation of how your project aligns.
- Identify at least one Dairy Business Innovation initiative technical assistance resources you referenced in the development of the proposed project. *(Refer to Project Requirements section of this RFA for links to relevant technical resources.)*
- Describe what you learned from this resource and how it shaped the development of your proposed project.
- What will success look like for this project?
- 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?

PROJECT 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 in the provided grid.

Example:

Detailed Description of Activity	Description of the deliverables you will be able to show in your reporting to demonstrate this has been activity has been successful	Estimated timeframe and/or date of completion of the key activity
Purchase and install specialized equipment X	1. Proof of full payment made on Equipment X 2. Photo documentation which shows the installation of the equipment 3. An analysis which shows reduction in labor due to automation	May 1, 2023-August 1, 2023

LETTERS & SUPPORTING DOCUMENTATION

Letters of Support/Commitment
At least one letter 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. Letters of Commitment are required for:
    1. Any match contributors outside of the applicant's business that are secured at the time of the application. Match contributors should describe and assign value to their match commitment (including financial or in-kind support)
- 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.
- Additional letters will increase the competitiveness of the application.

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

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.

Bids or quotes from potential contractors are strongly encouraged and will make for more competitive applications.

EXPECTED OUTCOMES

- 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
  - Farmers markets
  - Grocery stores
  - Wholesale markets
  - Other outlets
- As a result of this grant, do you expect an increase in revenue for your business/organization? If so, estimate the increase in revenue (in $)
- How many jobs are expected to be maintained due to this grant?
- How many jobs will 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.

BUDGET

Please complete the following budget table with estimates of grant and match amounts.

Grant funds requested must align with the allowable costs detailed in the 2021 AMS Terms and Conditions (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.)

Budget Table (example)

Expense Category	Grant Funds Requested	Applicant Contribution - Cash Match	Applicant Contribution - In-kind Match	Project Total
Specialized Equipment	$0.00	$0.00	$0.00	$0.00
Supplies	$3,000.00	$6,000.00	$0.00	$9,000.00

Contractual/Consultant	$35,000.00	$3,000.00	$0.00	$38,000.00
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	$0.00	$1,500.00	$1,700.00	$3,200.00
TOTALS	**$40,000.00**	**$12,000.00**	**$1,700.00**	**$53,700.00**

BUDGET NARRATIVE

- Total funds requested and amount of matching funds.
    - *Must be between $10,000 and $50,000*
- List amount of matching funds
- 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. Note that all outside match contributors must provide a letter of commitment for their match.
- Are all matching funds/contributions committed at this time? If not, provide the sources and timeline/plan for securing these commitments

*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 Request' 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 Request' column of your 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 Request' 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
- 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 Request' 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

- Specialized 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. ***Equipment is considered any one item which costs over $5,000, otherwise it should be categorized as supplies.***
- Are 'Travel' expenses included in the 'Grant Request' column of your above budget? *Such as travel to source and/or pick up equipment.*
  - 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 Request' column of your budget*? Such as shipping 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. *(E.g. meetings/conferences, communications, rental expenses, ads, publication costs, data collection.)*

ANTICIPATED PROGRAM 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?
- 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

III. APPLICATION SCORING CRITERIA

REVIEWER SCORING CRITERIA

Project Proposal (points)

Applicant demonstrates a comprehensive understanding of their businesses/organization's marketing and branding limitations and has a clear vision for a trajectory forward.	10 points
Project overview clearly illustrates an impactful, innovative, and realistic project that will improve marketability of Northeast dairy products. Applicant shows that they have worked with at least one potential contractor to develop their project concept.	15 points
Project timeline/workplan is clear and identifies a set of key activities that aligns with the project overview.	10 points
Applicant demonstrates that their project is well-aligned with funding priorities and provides details to support that.	5 points
Applicant provides clear and relevant reasoning for timely need for funding and can show that they have a reasonable plan for sustaining the activities implemented in this project past the grant period.	10 points
Letters of commitment/support and additional documentation that collectively demonstrate the potential for project success. Any match contributors have written letters of commitment outlining their match contribution and value.	15 points

Budget and Expected Outcomes (35 points)

Budget and budget narrative are realistic and sufficient to accomplish the work proposed, including using at least 75% of funds to hire a marketing/branding professional. Applicant has leveraged the required percentage of match contribution.	15 points
Applicant has provided sufficient detail for budget categories: 1. Match sources and details are clear, and 2. Fund requests are detailed thoroughly in the budget narrative.	10 points
Applicant provides reasonable expected outcomes via: 1. A useful plan for evaluating the success of their project including appropriate metrics to track. 2. Proposal includes at least two (2) of the following: • Increase in sales • Increase in revenue • Job creation and/or retention • New/existing outlets for consumer access to business's dairy products.	10 points

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 (VAAFM) indicating their intent to complete the proposed project and authorizing NE-DBIC/VAAFM 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 curent 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: 40%** 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: 40%** 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 expenditures
    h. Project outcomes:
        i. Results of grantees measurements of success
        ii. Sales increases
        iii. Increases in revenue
        iv. Jobs maintained/created
3. A post-grant survey will include questions which pertain to metrics regarding the following:
    a. Increase in consumption of and access to dairy projects
    b. Increase in sales of dairy products
    c. Development of new market opportunities for dairy producers and processors
    d. Dairy farmer/processor satisfaction of 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:*
>
>>*$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.