

Dairy Marketing & Branding Services Grant

FISCAL YEAR 2021 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, which will provide grants for established value-added dairy processors to access professional marketing and branding services to elevate their businesses. Projects funded through this program will focus on access to professional services in order to implement marketing tactics, brand improvements, and overall strategy. Grants are available to applicants in all New England states, Delaware, New Jersey, New York, and Pennsylvania.

KEY DATES

RFA Release Date: April 13, 2021

Application Opens: April 27, 2021

Application Deadline: June 8, 2021 at 4:00 PM EST

CONTENTS

I. Program Overview	3
II. Full Application	12
III. Scoring Criteria	18
IV. Grant Management & Reporting	19

CONTACT

PROGRAM QUESTIONS

Kathryn Donovan
Kathryn.Donovan@vermont.gov
(802) 585-4571

WEBGRANTS TECHNICAL ASSISTANCE

Rebecca Brockett
Rebecca.Brockett@vermont.gov
(802) 636-7016

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

RESOURCES FOR APPLYING

- Have questions about this grant? Visit our [Dairy Marketing & Branding Services Grant Q&A](#).
 - If you do not see the answer there, you can [submit your question](#) to be added or contact us.
- 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 (VAAFMM) 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@webgrantsmail.com>](mailto:agriculturegrants.vermont@webgrantsmail.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 (VAAFAM), is one of three USDA Dairy Business Innovation Initiatives (DBII) in the nation. The NE-DBIC serves all New England states, Delaware, New Jersey, New York, and Pennsylvania 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.

ELIGIBILITY

Established value-added dairy processors headquartered in the Northeast¹ region of the United States may apply for this grant. For the purposes of this grant program, dairy processors are those businesses that transform raw milk into an edible product that can be sold across state lines and are regulated by the federal Pasteurized Milk Ordinance (PMO).

AVAILABLE FUNDS

\$400,000

MINIMUM & MAXIMUM AWARD

Minimum: \$10,000

Maximum: \$50,000

PROJECT LENGTH

Approximately 15 months. All grant activities must be complete by November 15, 2022.

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, AM200100XXXXG003.

¹ For the purposes of this grant and the Northeast Dairy Business Innovation Center, the words "Northeast" or "Northeast region" refer to the following states: Connecticut, Delaware, Massachusetts, Maine, New Hampshire, New Jersey, New York, Pennsylvania, Rhode Island, and Vermont.

FUNDING OPPORTUNITY DESCRIPTION

In 2019, the U.S. Department of Agriculture (USDA) - Agricultural Marketing Service (AMS) selected three Dairy Business Innovation Initiative projects in the U.S. to support regional dairy businesses in the development, production, marketing, and distribution of dairy products. The Vermont-based Northeast Dairy Business Innovation Center (NE-DBIC) was selected and has since received \$6.59 million to support projects in the Northeast region of the U.S.

The NE-DBIC's Dairy Marketing and Branding Services grant program serves to elevate established value-added dairy processor businesses 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.

ELIGIBILITY

ELIGIBLE APPLICANTS

Applicants eligible for these funds must meet all the following criteria:

1. Applicants must be headquartered or based in the Northeast region²
 - Applicant's business must source or produce milk that originates within the Northeast region; and
 - Applicant's business must manufacture value-added dairy products within the Northeast region; and
2. Applicant must be an established processor that transforms raw milk into an edible product and is regulated by the federal Pasteurized Milk Ordinance (PMO); and
3. Applicant must demonstrate a comprehensive understanding of the market positioning of their current product range (e.g. how many units they sell in a given month, market outlets, flexibility of price points); and
4. Applicant must be 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.

² For the purposes of this grant and the Northeast Dairy Business Innovation Center, the words "Northeast" or "Northeast region" refer to the following states: Connecticut, Delaware, Massachusetts, Maine, New Hampshire, New Jersey, New York, and Pennsylvania, Rhode Island, and Vermont.

SECTION I: PROGRAM OVERVIEW

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

- Certificate of Insurance listing the Vermont Agency of Agriculture, Food & Markets as an additional insured
- Current W-9
- [DUNS number](#)
- Show proof of registration in the Federal [System for Award Management \(SAM\)](#)

Applicants who do not already have a DUNS number or a registration in SAM.gov are encouraged to start this process during the application period to ensure a timely start to their grant, if awarded.

ELIGIBLE PROJECTS

Eligible projects must use funds to:

1. Contract for professional marketing/branding services that will develop or improve the business's product position in the market. Professional service provider must be an individual or firm that specializes in marketing and/or branding services. Any individual(s) or firms(s) hired by the applicant must:
 - a. Have a legal business entity
 - b. Provide a portfolio and a quote to the grantee prior to commencing work (*Documentation of these will be required in grantee reporting to NE-DBIC.*)
 - c. Charge an hourly rate that does not exceed the salary of a GS-15 step 10 Federal employee in the contractor's area³. This does not include travel that is reasonable and necessary, fringe benefits, indirect costs, or other expenses. If rates exceed this amount, you must provide a justification.
 - d. Adhere to [AMS 2020 Terms and Conditions](#)

Additionally, projects may include:

2. Implementation costs: Expenses directly related to the implementation of the content or strategies developed by the professional, up to 25% of the total requested grant funds.

Grant funds must prioritize professional marketing/branding services. Up to 25% of total grant fund may be used to implement those services. For example, projects requesting \$20,000 in grant funds could utilize their funds in several ways:

³ Contractors hourly rates should align with the [2021 General Schedule \(base\)](#), unless the location of the contractor falls in a [Locality Pay Area](#) in which there is a [Localized Pay Schedule](#) specific to that area.

SECTION I: PROGRAM OVERVIEW

Project Funds	Scenario A	Scenario B	Scenario C
Professional services paid for by grant funds	\$20,000	\$18,000	\$16,000
Implementation costs paid by grant funds (no more than 25% of grant funds)	\$0	\$2,000	\$4,000
Additional implementation costs, paid by the business (counts as match)	\$0	\$3,000	\$25,000
Additional matching funds required	\$5,000	\$2,000	\$0
Total Grant Funds	\$20,000	\$20,000	\$20,000
TOTAL PROJECT COST	\$25,000	\$25,000	\$45,000

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.

Eligible Professional Services

Eligible marketing services may include, but are not limited to, activities related to the following:

- Strategy and Planning:
 - 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:
 - Design of logo, signage, advertisements, collateral design
 - Design of market-compliant labels, packaging
 - Brand style guide, templates
 - Data visualization or infographics
 - Tradeshow or event materials
 - Multimedia production such as video, radio, podcasts, PSAs
 - Development of marketing or branding for third-party e-commerce platforms.
- Digital Marketing and Web Development:
 - Digital content strategy
 - Web design, user experience and design
 - Digital creative including interactive or display advertising
 - Digital marketing plan including tactics, content, templates, and channels
 - Social media content including development of copy, messaging, and creative
 - Development of an e-commerce strategy and platform

SECTION I: PROGRAM OVERVIEW

- 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 or wholesale market expansion.
- Analytics & Reporting: Digital analytics including monitoring, reporting, and search optimization.

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:

- Trade show display construction for the purpose of temporary exhibition
- 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 advertisements on Facebook, Google, WeChat, etc. and search engine optimization (SEO)
- Costs associated with developing, servicing, and updating websites that clearly target consumers
- 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, 2022 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

Required Project Criteria

The following criteria must be addressed:

1. Applicant demonstrates they have conducted research and communicated with potential contractors. Utilizing the input from potential professional marketing/branding contractors, they have developed a comprehensive understanding of the scale, focus, costs, and impacts that the proposed project will encompass.
2. Project increases visibility and consumer awareness of the processor's dairy product line
3. Project develops market channels and distribution opportunities to:
 - a. increase product placement; and/or

SECTION I: PROGRAM OVERVIEW

- b. support innovative strategies to increase consumption; and/or
 - c. increase business revenues.
4. Business is able to sustain the changes/improvements past the grant period.
5. Project promotes the awareness and consumption of Northeast-regionally produced value-added products made from regionally produced milk.
6. If funds are used for non-contractual expenses (“Implementation costs”), they must align with the recommendations or materials developed by the marketing/branding professional.

Projects may only include allowable costs/activities as outlined in the [2020 AMS Terms and Conditions](#) (8.0 Allowable Costs and Activities).

INELIGIBLE PROJECTS

- Projects not primarily located within the Northeast region, as defined above
- Projects that seek to use funds to expand production, increase production efficiencies
- Projects that seek to hire in-house marketing, branding or sales positions
- Projects exclusively focused on export
- 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
 - Costs associated with attending a specific trade show
 - Salaries, fringe benefits, indirect costs
 - Branded items solely to be used as giveaways
- Expenses that include unallowable costs/activities as outlined in the [2020 AMS Terms and Conditions](#) (8.0 Allowable Costs and Activities)

EXAMPLE PROJECTS

Project examples include:

Example #1: A new generation has recently transitioned into the ownership of a creamery. Branding and marketing were not a focus for the previous owners. The new owners would like to make a statement with a rebrand and create momentum to engage in new markets, targeting higher 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, new promo materials, 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 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 struggle to know where and how to start a marketing plan for their business. They

SECTION I: PROGRAM OVERVIEW

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 processor is quickly expanding their production to meet their demand but has not had the cash flow to invest in an update of their promotional materials to align with their new logo and packaging to round out the level of professionalism they would like to convey. They hire for the design of a style guide and the design and purchase of a new trade show exhibit. They use implementation expenses for some of the production costs to build their new exhibit.

Example #5: A business owner had a friend build an e-commerce site to adapt to changing market channels during the 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 conduct an assessment of 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.

FUNDING PRIORITIES

The FY2021 Multi-Business Dairy Agritourism Grants will give priority to projects which address some or all of the following priorities:

- 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 their strategic and sustainable approach to business growth and positioning with clear long-term vision
- Projects that will increase sales, revenue, and/or consumers reached
- Projects that will elevate regional dairy businesses

MATCHING FUNDS

All proposals must show matching funds which represent at least 25% of the grant request. For instance, for a grant request of \$20,000, the applicant must demonstrate at least \$5,000 in match. Matching funds may be contributed by the applicant or by another organization. The 25% required match may be any combination of cash and in-kind funds in any expense category.

Any implementation costs of the professional services that are paid by the grantee count as match.

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.

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

SECTION I: PROGRAM OVERVIEW

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	Dairy Marketing & Branding Services Grant Request	Applicant Contribution - Cash Match	Applicant Contribution - In-kind Match	Match Source	Describe the Details/Purpose of Any Match Contributions
Contractual/ Consultant	\$15,000				
Personnel		\$1,000		Business funds from Marco's Creamery (the applicant's business)	Staff time to affix labels of first run: \$20/hr x 50 hrs = \$1,000
Fringe Benefits					
Travel					
Equipment					
Supplies		\$4,500		Business funds from Marco's Creamery	Marco's Creamery will purchase: Labeler: \$2,000 First label run: \$500 per (1,000) label run x 5 SKU = \$2,500.
Other	\$5,000				
Total	\$20,000	\$5,500	\$0		

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, 2021 – June 8, 2021 at 4:00 PM EST.

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.

Be advised that technical assistance with WebGrants may not be available shortly before deadlines; please plan accordingly.

SECTION I: PROGRAM OVERVIEW

APPLICATION REVIEW

Applications will be reviewed by a multi-state NE-DBIC advisory committee comprised of representatives from Northeast state agriculture agencies/departments, agriculture extension agencies, and dairy-industry stakeholders.

AWARD INFORMATION

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

KEY DATES

DATES MAY BE SUBJECT TO CHANGE

April 13, 2021	Request for Application (RFA) released
April 27, 2021	Application released
June 8, 2021 at 4:00 PM EST	Application closes
Early-July 2021	Applicants notified of award status
Mid-August 2021	Estimated grant project start date
March 15, 2022	Interim report due
November 15, 2022	Project end date
December 15, 2022	Final report and survey due

II. FULL APPLICATION

The full application content is listed below. Please reference the [WebGrants Application Guide](#) for guidance.

APPLICANT INFORMATION

Applicant Information

- Project Title
- Business/organization name, legal entity (e.g., LLC, sole proprietor, etc.), primary contact information
- Describe your business/organization in terms of size (gross sales, number of employees, production volume), markets, and number of years in business.
- Total grant funds requested.
 - Requested grant funds for implementing content or strategies developed by the hired contractor (no more than 25% of the total grant funds)
- Do you acknowledge that any grant funds that your business utilizes for implementation costs must directly align with recommendations and/or materials developed by the marketing/branding contractor? (Yes/No)
- Amount of match funds (must be at least 25% of grant funds)

Applicant Eligibility

- Is the applicant headquartered or based in a New England state, Delaware, New Jersey, New York, or Pennsylvania?
- Does the applicant's business source or produce milk that originates in New England, Delaware, New Jersey, New York, or Pennsylvania?
- Does the applicant's business manufacture value-added dairy products within New England, Delaware, New Jersey, New York, or Pennsylvania?
- Is the applicant an established processor that transforms raw milk into an edible product and is regulated by the federal Pasteurized Milk Ordinance (PMO)?
- Describe your business/organization in terms of size (gross sales, number of employees, production volume), markets, and number of years in business
- Describe your business's strategy or approach to sustainable business growth and positioning. What is your long-term vision?
- Provide a comprehensive overview of your current business marketing/branding strategy, marketing position, and sales outlets. (E.g. # units sold in a given month, flexibility of price points)
- What actions have you taken to improve your business's branding or marketing in the past 3-5 years? If you have not, why not?
- Describe how you are prepared to meet increases in product demand that may arise from services utilized through this grant. (E.g. tools, staffing, resources)

Entity History

SECTION II: SCORING CRITERIA

- Has your business/organization received any federal or state grant in the past 5 years?
- Have you or your project partners received any (federal, state, or other) grants for this specific project in the past 5 years? If yes:
 - List the grants received.
 - Describe the work done under these grants.
 - How will the work in this grant differ from and/or build upon that work?
- Have you applied for, or do you plan to apply for, other grant(s) in conjunction with this grant? If yes:
 - Please list the other grants you will apply for/have applied for in conjunction with this grant
- Has your business ever been unable to complete or adhere to granting requirements for a grant you were awarded? If yes:
 - Describe the circumstances that prevented you from completing/adhering to the requirements of your grant(s)
- 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 strategic branding/marketing improvements.
- Select your type of accounting system (*Select from dropdown: automated, manual, combination*)

PROJECT DESCRIPTION

Project Details

Projects that demonstrate comprehensive background research, contractor communications, and a well-informed concept will increase the competitiveness of the application. 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--before funds are spent--to ensure alignment with USDA-AMS allowed costs.

- Provide an overview of your project. Please describe how requested funds and required matching funds would be used.
- Describe in detail the expected scope of the branding/marketing contractor for this project. (*Refer to Eligibility section of this RFA for examples.*)
- Describe in detail the expected use of implementation costs for the strategy and/or content provided by the contractor. If not applicable, enter 'N/A' (*Refer to Eligibility section of the RFA for examples.*)
- Provide an explanation of 1) why these grant funds are needed and 2) how the project would or would not move forward without these funds.
- Will this work build on previous marketing and branding efforts of your business? If yes:
 - Describe how it will build on those previous efforts.

SECTION II: SCORING CRITERIA

- To increase the competitiveness of your application, select any or all of the funding priorities addressed in your proposed project:
 - a) Application demonstrates engagement with multiple potential contractors ahead of submission
 - b) Project shows innovation in packaging type or market channels
 - c) Project will show or support substantial online/digital engagement
 - d) Project builds on or enhances previous marketing and branding efforts
 - e) Application demonstrates strategic and sustainable approach to business growth and positioning with clear long-term vision
 - f) Project will increase sales, revenue, and/or consumers reached
 - g) Project will elevate regional dairy businesses
- For each funding priority you identified above, explain how your project addresses the priority

Project Eligibility

- Describe your process for researching and identifying potential contractors.
- Describe how your communication with potential contractors informed the 1) scale, 2) focus, 3) costs, and 4) desired impacts of this project.
- How will this project enhance the visibility and consumer awareness of your business's value-added dairy product line?
- How will this project develop market channels and distribution opportunities to increase your product placement, support innovative strategies to increase consumption, and/or increase business revenues?
- How do you plan to sustain the activities implemented through this project beyond the grant period?

Supporting Documentation

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

Letters of Commitment or Support

- At least one letter of commitment or support is required for this application. Additional letters will increase the competitiveness of the application.
 - Letters of Commitment should articulate the project partners' involvement and identify the contributions they will make to ensure the project's success (including financial or in-kind support).
 - Letters of Support should articulate general support from local organizations/businesses and should describe the benefits of the project on the local community.

SECTION II: SCORING CRITERIA

BUDGET

Please complete the following budget table, listing all grant requests and match contributions. Match sources and details must be included. Grant funds requested must align with the allowable costs detailed in the [2020 AMS Terms and Conditions](#) (8.0 Allowable Costs and Activities). Grant funds may be used for the following:

- Contractors/consultants for marketing/branding services
- Up to 25% of requested funds may be in implementation costs for those activities (all costs other than contractual/consultant)

Match contributions

Projects must demonstrate matching funds of at least 25% as cash and/or in-kind sources. (e.g. \$10,000 of requested funds requires at least \$2,500 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 of \$7,000 in supplies and \$5,000 in personnel could be matched with \$6,000 of equipment.)

Budget Table (example)

Expense Category	Dairy Marketing & Branding Services Grant Request	Applicant Contribution - Cash Match	Applicant Contribution - In-kind Match	Match Source	Describe the Details/Purpose of Any Match Contributions
Contractual/ Consultant	\$15,000				
Personnel		\$1,000		Business funds from Marco's Creamery (the applicant's business)	Staff time to affix labels of first run: \$20/hr x 50 hrs = \$1,000
Fringe Benefits					
Travel					
Equipment					
Supplies		\$4,500		Business funds from Marco's Creamery	Marco's Creamery will purchase: Labeler: \$2,000 First label run: \$500 per (1,000) label run x 5 SKU = \$2,500.
Other	\$5,000				
Total	\$20,000	\$5,500	\$0		

FINANCIALS & OUTCOMES

Budget Narrative

Complete the following questions **only for expenses that are covered by grant funds** (not matching funds). Please thoroughly describe each category for which you are requesting grant funds, answering all parts of each question. Please refer to the [2020 AMS Terms and Conditions](#) (8.0 Allowable Costs and Activities) for details on allowable costs under this grant.

- Contractual/Consultant: List each anticipated contractor/consultant. For each, provide: 1) hourly/flat rate, 2) grant funds requested, 3) detailed description of anticipated services, and 4) justification for why the services are necessary to this project. *(Grant funds for a contractor/consultant must be for professional branding/marketing services only.)*
 - If contractor's hourly rate falls above the salary of a GS-15 step 10 Federal employee in the contractor's area, please provide justification.

Any grant funds used for the following categories are considered 'Implementation Costs' for this grant and must be directly attributed to implementing the strategy or content developed by the marketing/branding contractor.

- Are 'Personnel' expenses included in the 'Grant Request' column of your budget? If yes:
 - Personnel: for each individual whose time can be directly attributed to implementing content or strategy associated with the grant activities, provide 1) individual's title and role, 2) hourly rate, 3) expected number of hours, 4) grant funds requested, and 5) justification for how these funds will be used to implement the strategy or content developed by the marketing/branding contractor
- 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 'Travel' expenses included in the 'Grant Request' column of your budget? If yes:
 - 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 will be used to implement the strategy or content developed by the marketing/branding contractor
- Are 'Equipment' expenses included in the 'Grant Request' column of your budget? If yes:
 - Equipment: List each piece of equipment (with description if needed) and for each, indicate: 1) whether it is a rental or purchase, 2) grant funds requested per piece, and 3) justification for how this equipment will be used to implement the strategy or content developed by the marketing/branding contractor. *(Equipment expenses allowable in this grant include only the rental, not purchase, of equipment.)*
- Are 'Supply' expenses included in the 'Grant Request' column of your budget? 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 will be used to implement the strategy or content developed by the

SECTION II: SCORING CRITERIA

marketing/branding contractor. *(Supplies include materials, supplies, and fabricated parts costing less than \$5,000 per unit.)*

- Are 'Other' expenses included in the 'Grant Request' column of your budget? 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 will be used to implement the strategy or content developed by the marketing/branding contractor. *(E.g. meetings/conferences, communications, rental expenses, ads, publication costs, data collection.)*
- Are all matching funds/contributions committed at this time?
 - If not, provide the sources and timeline/plan for securing these commitments.

Expected Outcomes

- Describe how you will evaluate the success of your project.
- What is the percent increase in sales that you anticipate from these grant activities for your business? *(E.g. If your sales were \$50,000 before & \$60,000 after: $(\$60,000 - \$50,000) / \$50,000 \times 100 = 20\%$)*
- How many new or existing outlets do you expect consumers to use to buy your business's dairy products for each of the categories below? If not applicable to your business/organization, enter zero (0).
 - Number of grocery stores
 - Number of wholesale markets
 - Other outlets
 - If other outlets, please list.
- As a result of this grant, do you expect an increase in revenue for your businesses? If yes:
 - Please estimate the increase in revenue (in \$)
- How many jobs are expected to be maintained and/or created because of this grant project?

III. SCORING CRITERIA

REVIEWER SCORING CRITERIA

Project Proposal (70 points)

Applicant demonstrates a comprehensive understanding of their businesses trajectory forward and ability to adapt to the changes in product demand that could result from this grant.	10 points
Applicant demonstrates a comprehensive overview of their current business marketing/branding strategy, marketing position, and sales outlets and shows they have exerted reasonable efforts to establish or improve their strategy over time.	5 points
Project overview illustrates an impactful, innovative, and realistic project that will elevate the applicant's business and build on their previous marketing and branding efforts.	15 points
Application demonstrates that the business researched and communicated with potential contractor(s) to have an in-depth and reasonable project scope.	15 points
Applicant demonstrates that their project is well-aligned with funding priorities and provides details to support that.	5 points
The quality of the proposal is comprehensible and clear.	10 points
Applicant submitted supporting documentation that clearly and comprehensively illustrates that the grant funds will be a sound investment and will help the entity meet its future goals.	5 points
Applicant's narrative responses and letters of commitment/support collectively demonstrate the potential for project success.	5 points

Budget and Expected Outcomes (30 points)

Budget summary is realistic and sufficient to accomplish the work proposed. Applicant has leveraged the required percentage of match contribution.	15 points
Applicant has provided sufficient detail for budget categories: <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Match sources and details are clear, and 2. Fund requests are detailed thoroughly in the budget narrative. 	5 points
The proposal includes at least one expected outcome showing an increase in sales or revenue.	5 points
The proposal includes at least one expected outcome showing one or more of the following: <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Job creation and/or retention 2. New/existing outlets for consumer access to business's dairy products. 	5 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 (VAAFAM) indicating their intent to complete the proposed project and authorizing NE-DBIC/VAAFAM to monitor the project's progress. The grant agreement will include provisions (terms and conditions) set by the State of Vermont as well as any program-specific requirements. Review [Attachment C - Standard State Provisions and Contracts and Grants](#) (12/15/2017 Revised).

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

- A. A certificate of insurance consistent with the requirements set forth in Attachment C of the grant agreement [Not required if grantee has a current certificate of insurance on file with the Agency of Agriculture.]
- B. A current [IRS Form W-9](#) (Request for Taxpayer Identification Number and Certification), signed within the past six months
- C. [DUNS Number](#)
- D. Confirmation of an active registration in the Federal System for Award Management (SAM) at <https://www.sam.gov>.
- E. Documentation verifying pledged matching funds, as applicable.

GRANTEE PAYMENT 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 SAM.gov registration, and 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 (March 2022) which may include:
 - 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. This must include a quote and portfolio from the selected contractor(s)
 - 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:
 - 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. New and existing outlets
 - 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/VAAFAM reserves the right to utilize and/or summarize information and photos provided through these reports to use on publications/promotions.

NE-DBIC via VAAFAM 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.