



VERMONT LOCAL FOOD MARKET DEVELOPMENT PROGRAM

FISCAL YEAR 2020 REQUEST FOR APPLICATIONS

This program provides funding for Vermont producers to help them access and engage with institutional markets with the goal of increasing the quantity of local foods in Vermont institutions.

KEY DATES

Application Opens: February 24th, 2020 at Noon

Application Deadline: April 12th, 2020 at 11:59PM

Application Notifications: Early May, 2020

CONTENTS

I. Program Overview and Funding Eligibility	2-3
II. Application Process and Content	4-7
III. Evaluation Criteria	8
IV. Grant Management & Reporting	9-10

CONTACT

PROGRAM QUESTIONS

Trevor Lowell
Trevor.Lowell@vermont.gov
(802) 585-9186

WEBGRANTS TECHNICAL ASSISTANCE

Diana Ferguson
Diana.Ferguson@vermont.gov
(802) 622-4094

I. PROGRAM OVERVIEW AND FUNDING ELIGIBILITY

QUICK FACTS

PROGRAM PURPOSE

The purpose of this grant is to foster Vermont producers' access to wholesale markets and to increase the quantity of local food available in Vermont institutions and other Vermont wholesale markets by addressing barriers in the supply chain.

ELIGIBILITY

Only proposals that address institutional or in-state wholesale market development, or a that will directly support Vermont producers' access to institutional or wholesale market expansion in Vermont, will be considered. The following entities are eligible to apply for this competitive grant:

- Vermont producers or producer groups
- Supply chain facilitators

AVAILABLE FUNDS

The total amount of funds available for this grant cycle is \$30,000.

MINIMUM & MAXIMUM AWARD

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

MATCH REQUIREMENT

Applicants are required to provide matching funds, in the form of cash or in-kind services. The minimum match requirement is 25% of the total grant fund request.

PROJECT LENGTH

Each successful grantee will have a year from the signing of their grant agreement to expend their grant funds and submit all required deliverables.

FUNDING SOURCE

Funding for this grant program is allocated by the Vermont State Legislature.

FUNDING OPPORTUNITY DESCRIPTION

In 2011 the Vermont Legislature provided funding to the Vermont Agency of Agriculture, Food and Markets (VAAFAM) for the creation of the Vermont Local Food Market Development Grant Program. This program is designed to encourage local food market development opportunities with an institutional focus across the state. Examples of institutions include, but are not limited to, schools, colleges and universities, hospitals, correctional facilities, and nursing homes.

ELIGIBILITY

ELIGIBLE APPLICANTS

This grant opportunity is open to any Vermont producer(s), producer group(s), or supply chain facilitator(s). Applicants must be in compliance with State regulations and in good standing with the State of Vermont in order to be considered for funding. Application must clearly demonstrate improvements in access to Vermont institutional markets and/or Vermont wholesale markets to be considered for this grant. Institutional and wholesale markets include:

- Colleges and universities
- Schools
- Early childhood education facilities
- Nursing homes
- Correctional facilities
- Grocery and retail stores
- Food co-ops
- Food hubs

ELIGIBLE PROJECTS

- Infrastructure Development – on farm capital improvements, equipment purchases
- Technology – accounting, tracking, and/or sales software, website or app development
- Market Access and Development – innovative solutions to logistics and/or distribution

INELIGIBLE PROJECTS

- Vehicle purchases
- Land purchases
- Funding for purchases made prior to award notification
- Funding for projects where value-added products contain less than 51% Vermont grown ingredients

MATCHING FUNDS

Applicants must demonstrate matching funds in the form of cash or in-kind services. The minimum match requirement must be equal to, or greater than, 25% of the requested grant funds. For example, a \$2,000 grant would require the applicant to contribute at least \$500 in cash and/or in-kind match.

Eligible match sources include applicant's own capital, outside investment capital, and/or grants from private or public sources. Match support can come in the form of in-kind time and services related to the institutional and in-state wholesale market development activities. All matching funds must be directed to the same project for which the applicant is requesting grant funds. Applicants can satisfy match requirements through a combination of cash and in-kind services. In-kind services must be quantified at fair market value.

AWARD INFORMATION

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

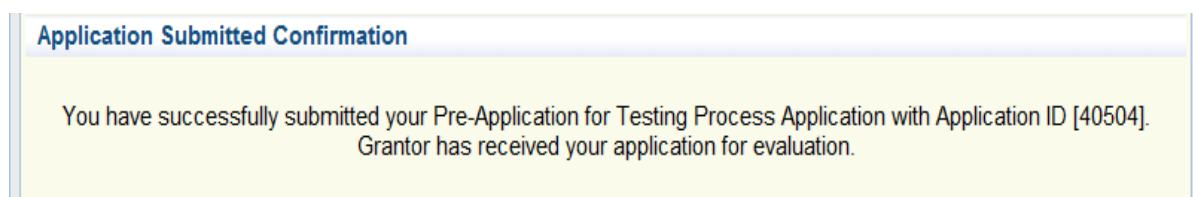
II. APPLICATION PROCESS AND CONTENT

HOW TO APPLY

Applications must be submitted through the Agency's online grant management system, WebGrants, at <https://agriculturegrants.vermont.gov> by 11:59 PM on April 12th, 2020. Paper applications will not be accepted. **Note:** If you or your organization have previously registered in WebGrants, please do not create another account.

Detailed guidance on WebGrants navigation and application submission can be found at <https://agriculture.vermont.gov/grants/howtoapply>.

After successfully submitting your application, you will see an **Application Submitted Confirmation** screen with an Application ID number. (See example below.)



Agency of Agriculture, Food and Markets staff are available to provide assistance during State of Vermont business hours, Monday - Friday, 7:45 AM to 4:30 PM. Please read the complete application guide referenced above before requesting support. Please plan ahead, as assistance may not be available shortly before deadlines.

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. 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.

WebGrants will prevent applications from being submitted after the cut-off time. VAAFMM will not accept submission or re-submission of incomplete or delayed applications after the posted deadline, barring exceptional circumstances.

APPLICATION CONTENT

A. APPLICANT INFORMATION

1. Farm/Business/Organization Name:
2. Farm/Business/Organization Physical Address:
3. Primary Contact First and Last Name:
4. Email address:
5. Mailing Address (Including Zip)
6. County:
7. Business Phone:
8. Cell Phone:
9. Have you ever received a grant from the Agency of Agriculture, Food & Markets?
10. Are you applying for other grants from the Agency of Agriculture, Food & Markets in 2020?

B. OVERVIEW OF FARM BUSINESS OR ORGANIZATION

Farmer/Producer Applications:

1. Include a basic description of the farm business, including a brief history, products sold, acres in production and current market outlets.
2. Provide previous two years of farm gross sales and current market outlets.

Value-Chain Facilitator Applications:

1. Include a basic description of the organization, including a brief history, services provided and relevant market development experience.
2. Provide previous two years of gross sales and current market outlets for the organization or the producers involved with this proposal.
3. Provide a list of all producers the organization works with and how long the relationship has existed.

C. PROJECT DESCRIPTION

1. Project Title: (Provide a descriptive title in seven words or fewer)
2. Describe the proposed market development or expansion achieved as a result of the project (2-3 sentences).

D. MARKET DEVELOPMENT GOALS

Explain how the proposed project will allow the applicant - or producers the applicant will work with - to increase institutional and wholesale market access in Vermont.

1. What are the projected financial returns for the farm business or organization, and/or to the local agricultural community?
2. Anticipated number of new institutional or other wholesale market relationships established in Vermont?
3. Identify how you will track the change in volume and value of local food sales resulting from this project.
4. Estimated quantity of local food that will be moved through these markets in a typical year?
5. Estimated value of local food that will be moved through these markets in a typical year?

SECTION II: APPLICATION PROCESS AND CONTENT

E. GOALS, PERFORMANCE MEASURES, AND EXPECTED OUTCOMES

Performance Measures will serve as metrics for how you intend to measure project success. Use the following table for outlining your goals, performance measures, and expected outcomes. (Example table is included as guidance).

Goals	Performance Measures	Expected Outcomes
<i>Ex. Supply new institutional customers with demanded products.</i>	<i>Pounds of new product purchased monthly.</i>	<i>School purchases X pounds (% increase) of new product per month.</i>
<i>Ex. Increase production efficiency with new equipment.</i>	<i>Production time of set pounds of product.</i>	<i>Production time decreased by x hours/x pounds (increase efficiency %)</i>
<i>Ex. Implement new local product tracking system.</i>	<i>Monthly sales by product type are tracked and shared.</i>	<i>X number of products are tracked by X number of businesses and shared.</i>

In addition, we welcome quotes from customers or employees or brief stories highlighting how these investments improve your enterprise's ability to serve institutional and commercial markets in Vermont.

F. METHODOLOGY

1. Who are the proposed supply chain partners?
2. What are the proposed market outlets the applicant anticipates reaching?
3. How will the new market relationships be developed?
4. How does the project directly impact producers?
5. Include a marketing plan outline and address strategies for achieving financial sustainability.

G. PROJECT TIMELINE

Provide a timeline for the project. All Local Food Market Development Grant Program funds must be obligated, and project work must be completed, within one calendar year from the time the grant agreement is finalized.

Task	Approximate Start Date	Approximate Completion Date

H. COMMUNICATION PLAN

Describe how you are planning to educate the community about your project, share your communication plan for your business/organization. For example, organization newsletter, TV and local newspaper, social media updates. Describe the methodology and frequency of each communication method.

SECTION II: APPLICATION PROCESS AND CONTENT

I. BUDGET

Financial assistance request from grant program (up to \$5,000) \$ _____

Applicants must demonstrate cash or in-kind match funding that is equal to or greater than 25% of the grant request. Match Contribution \$ _____

Eligible match sources can include: applicant’s own capital, outside investment capital, and/or grants from private or public sources. Match support can come in the form of in-kind time and services related to the institutional and in-state wholesale market development activities. All matching funds must be directed to the same project for which the applicant is requesting grant funds. In-kind services must be quantified at fair market value.

Please show budgeted amounts of the proposed project for expanding your in-state wholesale and/or institutional market capacity. Enter each line item of your budget into the appropriate field in the WebGrants system. You may wish to utilize the budget template below to construct your budget before entering numbers into the online system. Strong applications will provide supporting documentation for proposed budget expenses.

VT Local Food Market Development Grant Project Budget (Grant Request and Match)

Category	Total Costs	Grant Funds Requested	Item(s) Description	Match Funds	Match Source
Construction					
Equipment					
Labor					
Materials					
Other					
Totals					

Total Project Cost: \$
 % Cash Match: %
 (auto total based on above figures)

Budget Narrative

Please provide a budget narrative to demonstrate how the funds will be used, where matching funds or in-kind services are expected to come from, and what matching funds are currently secured.

J. LETTER(S) OF SUPPORT

At least one letter of support is required demonstrating commitment from a Vermont institutional buyer or local food producer. Additional letters are welcome, but not required. The letter(s) should highlight the interest in increased local food consumption at a Vermont institution or wholesale outlet.

Please upload any additional documents that can further detail your project budget such as quotes, photographs, written testimonies, business plans, etc.

III. EVALUATION CRITERIA

APPLICATION REVIEW

Applications will be reviewed by an advisory panel which will include representatives from the Vermont Agency of Agriculture, Food, and Markets and other food system stakeholders. Successful applications will be chosen based upon the evaluation criteria as detailed in this RFA and scored, in part, based on the scoring criteria provided.

Applications will be evaluated based upon the following criteria:

- Application meets all RFP eligibility and submission requirements.
- Application adequately explains how grant funds will be used.
- Application has a realistic implementation timeline and can be completed within one year.
- Application adequately identifies all contingencies or permits that may be required.

SCORING CRITERIA

Market Development Goals and Performance Measures. The application clearly articulates a viable market development strategy that directly addresses increased capacity to access and engage with Vermont institutional and/or wholesale markets. The project is likely to result in an increase in the value and/or volume of local food sourced by Vermont institutional and/or wholesale markets. Application includes strategies for achieving financial sustainability and tracking local products. *Up to 25 points.*

Methodology and Timeline. Work plan is thorough and realistic. The application demonstrates an ability to meet all goals and required deliverables within the grant period. *Up to 20 points.*

Communication plan. The application addresses the priorities of community outreach and engagement through a coherent and realistic communication plan? *Up to 15 points.*

Budget. Costs are reasonable and budget demonstrates leveraging of additional resources, including required match (e.g. cash and/or in-kind match). *Up to 20 points.*

Experience. Applicant has evidence of successful experience as a producer in direct marketing or as an organization working with the agricultural community in market access/development. Evidence of successful experience may be: (1) a self-description of experience supplied by the applicant, (2) a letter of support from a local community or business leader explaining the applicant's experience, or (3) a business plan highlighting previous experience and future plans. *Up to 10 points.*

Previous Grant Performance. If you have never received a grant from the Agency of Agriculture, Food & Markets you will get full points for this. Anyone who has received previous grants will be scored based off previous grant performance. *Up to 5 points.*

Letter(s) of Support. At least **one letter of support is required** demonstrating commitment from an institutional or other wholesale buyer in Vermont or local Vermont food producer. The letter(s) should highlight the interest in seeing more local food consumed at a Vermont institution or wholesale outlet.

IV. GRANT MANAGEMENT AND REPORTING

GRANT AGREEMENT AND PAYMENT

Prior to receiving funding, successful applicants must sign a grant agreement with the Vermont Agency of Agriculture, Food & Markets (VAAFAM) indicating their intent to complete the proposed project and authorizing VAAFAM to monitor the project's progress. The grant agreement will include provisions (terms and conditions) set by the State of Vermont as well as any program-specific requirements. Review Attachment C - Standard State Provisions and Contracts and Grants (12/15/2017 Revised) at bgs.vermont.gov/purchasing-contracting/forms for the most recent State of Vermont provisions.

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

- A. A certificate of insurance consistent with the requirements set forth in Attachment C of the grant agreement (not required if grantee has a current certificate of insurance on file with the Agency of Agriculture)
- B. A current [IRS Form W-9](#) (Request for Taxpayer Identification Number and Certification), signed within the past six months (required only if not a previous State of Vermont grant recipient or if any information has changed since the last award)
- C. Completed [Act 154 Good Standing Certification](#).
- D. Documentation verifying committed matching funds.

GRANTEE PAYMENT SCHEDULE

Grant funds will be disbursed in two payments, each initiated by the grantee submitting a claim through their WebGrants account. Information about how to submit a claim is available at www.agriculture.vermont.gov/grants/howtoclaim. Grantees may submit a claim for 50% of their grant funds once their grant agreement has been approved and signed by both parties and is therefore fully executed.

The remaining 50% of grant funds can be claimed once the project is completed, the grantee has submitted their final report, and the Agency has confirmed that all requirements of the grant agreement have been met. Final reports and final claims must be submitted within 30 days of the grant end date.

Funds disbursement for large equipment purchases will be handled on a case-by-case basis; initial payments for up to 80% of total grant funds may be permitted with prior approval from the grant program manager.

REPORTING REQUIREMENTS

The Agency will look forward to learning from both successes and challenges in achieving the anticipated outcomes. We ask that grantees share with us observations about what changed as a result of the investments this grant enabled, and what was learned that others could benefit from. Your experience and observations will help us improve future grant rounds and will help us demonstrate the value of these funds to public policy makers and budget writers, as well as any other funding partners.

To that end, successful grantees will be required to submit two reports throughout the grant period. The first is the Interim Report, due six months after the grant agreement has been fully executed. The second is the Final Report, due thirty days after the end of the grant period. These reports will be submitted through WebGrants at <https://agriculturegrants.vermont.gov> and will require the grantee to provide quantitative and qualitative data about their grant project, including, but not limited to, progress made on meeting goals and outcomes, project-related communications, and a description of how grant and matching funds were spent.

ADDITIONAL FUNDING OPPORTUNITIES & RESOURCES FOR BUSINESSES

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

Funding Opportunities: agriculture.vermont.gov/grants

Business Planning & Assistance: agriculture.vermont.gov/businessdevelopment/planning