

VERMONT AGENCY OF AGRICULTURE, FOOD & MARKETS

FARM TO INSTITUTION MARKET

DEVELOPMENT GRANT

REQUEST FOR APPLICATIONS – FISCAL YEAR 2023

This funding opportunity is intended to support market development opportunities for local food producers and processors, with a focus on Vermont institutional markets. Funding is provided to help improve local producer access to, and engagement with, schools, hospitals, colleges, correctional facilities, and other local institutions.

KEY DATES

PUBLICATION DATE: March 28, 2023

OPTIONAL APPLICANT WEBINAR: April 6, 2023 at 10 AM - [Register for Webinar](#)

APPLICATION DEADLINE: April 25, 2023 at 12:00 PM (NOON)

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SECTION 1: OVERVIEW & ELIGIBILITY

CONTACT INFORMATION

PROGRAM QUESTIONS

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WEBGRANTS TECHNICAL ASSISTANCE

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

WEBGRANTS

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

REGISTRATION

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

SUBMISSION POLICY

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

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

SUBMISSION CONFIRMATION

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

SECTION 1: OVERVIEW & ELIGIBILITY

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PROGRAM PURPOSE

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

ELIGIBILITY

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

- Vermont farm or food businesses
- Vermont producer groups or associations
- Supply chain facilitators (non-profits, economic development authorities, food hubs, etc.)

AVAILABLE FUNDS

A total of \$30,000 is available through this competitive funding opportunity.

MINIMUM & MAXIMUM AWARD

The minimum award for this grant program is \$10,000. The maximum award is \$30,000.

PROJECT LENGTH

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

FUNDING SOURCE

Funding is provided by an annual State of Vermont legislative appropriation.

FUNDING OPPORTUNITY DESCRIPTION

In 2011 the Vermont Legislature provided funding to the Vermont Agency of Agriculture, Food and Markets (VAAF) for the creation of the Vermont Local Food Market Development Grant Program. In 2023, this program was renamed the Farm to Institution Market Development Grant to emphasize a focus on developing institutional markets for local food. This program is designed to encourage market development opportunities with an institutional focus across the state.

Application must clearly demonstrate improvements in local farmer access to Vermont institutional markets to be considered for this grant. Examples of institutional markets include:

SECTION 1: OVERVIEW & ELIGIBILITY

- Colleges and universities
- Schools
- Early childhood education facilities
- Correctional facilities
- Nursing homes
- Hospitals and healthcare providers

ELIGIBILITY

ELIGIBLE APPLICANTS

This grant opportunity is open to any Vermont farm or food business, producer association, or supply chain facilitator (non-profit organizations, community development authorities, food hubs etc.). Applicants must be in compliance with State regulations and in good standing with the State of Vermont in order to be considered for funding.

ELIGIBLE PROJECTS

- Projects must increase institutional market opportunity for at least one Vermont farm business
- Projects must increase the amount of local food purchased and served in local institutions
- Projects must focus on collaboration, developing new sales relationships or deepening existing sales relationships, and values-based procurement for institutions serving meals to Vermont residents

INELIGIBLE PROJECTS

- Vehicle purchases
- Land purchases
- Funding for purchases made prior to award notification
- Funding for projects that promote non-local food products, as defined by [Act 129](#)

DOCUMENTATION

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

- Certificate of Insurance listing the VAAFMM as an additional insured
- Current IRS Form W-9

For more information, see Section 4: Grant Management and Reporting.

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

SECTION 1: OVERVIEW & ELIGIBILITY

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 an applicant's own capital, outside investment capital, and/or grants from private or public sources. A match of in-kind time and/or services directly related to the grant activities is also acceptable. 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 align with fair market rates.

APPLICATION REVIEW

Applications will be reviewed by an independent review committee comprised of members from communities across the state. Each application will be scored using the same rubric and will be reviewed by a minimum of three independent reviewers to determine an overall average score. Upon completion of the grant review process, both successful and unsuccessful applicants will receive emails notifying them of their award status. VAAFM is happy to provide feedback about applications or award decisions upon request.

KEY DATES

DATES MAY BE SUBJECT TO CHANGE

March 28, 2023	12:00 PM (NOON)	Application Opens
April 6, 2023	10:00 AM	Register for Optional Applicant Webinar
April 25, 2023	12:00 PM (NOON)	Deadline to Submit Applications
Mid-May, 2023		Application Review Period
End of May, 2023		Award Announcements Made
Mid-June, 2023		Project Start Date
June 30, 2025		Project End Date

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

SECTION 2: APPLICATION

A. APPLICANT INFORMATION

1. Name of applicant
 - Title or role
 - Email
 - Phone
2. Name of business or organization
 - Street address
 - Mailing address, (if different than above)
 - City/town
 - County
 - Zip code
3. How many years has the business/organization been in operation?
4. How many employees work for the business/organization?
5. If desired, describe any employee benefits provided by the business/organization
6. Have you applied, or do you plan to apply for other grants from the VT Agency of Agriculture in 2022? (Y/N) If yes:
 - List all grants you've applied for, or plan to apply for, and describe the projects they are meant to support
7. Has this business or organization ever received a grant from the VT Agency of Agriculture? (Y/N) If yes:
 - List all grants received and the year in which they were awarded
8. Has this business or organization applied for any grants from the VT Agency of Agriculture and not been awarded? (Y/N) If yes:
 - List all the grants applied for but not received. Include the years in which the applications were submitted

B. BUSINESS OR ORGANIZATION INFORMATION

9. Are you applying as a farm business? (Y/N) If yes:
 - Describe the products the farm grows, raises and/or produces
 - How many acres are currently in production?
 - Describe the farm's current market outlets
 - Provide the farm's gross profit figures for the most recent two years of operations
 - If desired, describe any environmental, social or community initiatives the farm is involved in
10. Are you applying as a producer association? (Y/N) If yes:
 - Describe the role of the association and its primary activities
 - Does the association operate state-wide? (Y/N) If no:
 - Describe the region of the state where the association operates
 - How is the association funded?
 - What is the association's annual operating budget?
 - How many businesses/farms does the association support?

SECTION 2: APPLICATION

11. Are you applying as a non-profit or other organization working to improve the food system? (Y/N) If yes:
 - What is the mission of the organization?
 - What is the organization's annual operating budget?
 - Does the organization conduct work state-wide? (Y/N) If no:
 - Describe the region(s) of the state where the organization's work is focused
12. Are there other businesses or organizations involved in this project beside the primary applicant? (Y/N) If yes:
 - List all additional project partners and provide a brief description of their business/organization

C. PROJECT DESCRIPTION AND IMPACT

13. Provide a descriptive title in seven words or fewer
14. Provide a detailed summary of the proposed project
15. How many local food producers would benefit from this project?
16. Identify and briefly describe the local food producers that would benefit from this project, if possible.
17. If this project were successfully completed, estimate the total annual increase in local product sales that would result
18. How many new institutional market relationships would result from this project?
19. Identify and briefly describe the new institutional market relationship(s) expected from this project.
20. How will you track the change in volume and value of local food sales resulting from this project?
21. Will there be any marketing and/or outreach involved with the proposed project? (Y/N) If yes:
 - Describe the marketing and/or outreach strategies
22. Are there any permits, licenses or similar documents required to complete the proposed project? (Y/N) If yes:
 - Have these permits/licenses been secured, and if not describe how and when they will be.

D. GOALS, PERFORMANCE MEASURES, AND EXPECTED OUTCOMES

Fill in the following table outlining at least three goals, performance measures and expected outcomes as they relate to the proposed project. Examples are provided in the table below.

Goals	Performance Measures	Expected Outcomes
<i>Ex. Supply new school 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>

SECTION 2: APPLICATION

E. PROJECT TIMELINE

Provide a timeline for the project. All grant funds must be obligated, and project work must be completed, within two calendar years from the time the grant agreement is finalized.

Task	Approximate Start Date	Approximate Completion Date	Responsible Party

F. BUDGET

The maximum grant award for this funding opportunity is \$30,000 and the minimum is \$10,000. Applicants must demonstrate cash or in-kind match funding that is equal to or greater than 25% of the grant request.

23. How much grant funding are you requesting?
24. How much match funding are you contributing?
25. How do you plan to meet the match requirement? (Cash, In-Kind, Combination of Both)
26. If using a cash match for all or part of your match requirement, is the match funding secured at the time of this application? (Y/N) If no:
 - o Describe how and when the match funding will be secured
27. Is using in-kind services for all or part of your match requirement, describe how you determined the value of these services.
28. Provide any additional information about the project budget you think would be helpful for the review committee to know.

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 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.

SECTION 2: APPLICATION

Complete the following budget table. Provide as much detail in the Item Description column as possible. Strong applications will provide supporting documentation for proposed budget expenses.

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

G. LETTER(S) OF SUPPORT & SUPPORTING DOCUMENTATION

Space is provided in the online application to upload letters of support from project partners, such as institutional buyers. Letters of support are optional but can improve the competitiveness of an application. There is also space to upload supporting documentation, such as professional cost estimates for budget items, business plans or testimonials. In addition, we welcome quotes from customers or employees or brief stories highlighting how these investments improve your enterprise's ability to serve institutional markets in Vermont.

SECTION 3: APPLICATION SCORING 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 markets. The project is likely to result in an increase in the value and/or volume of local food sourced by Vermont institutional markets. Application Includes strategies for achieving financial sustainability and tracking local products.

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.

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

Experience. Applicant provides evidence of relevant experience/expertise in market development 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.

Letter(s) of Support. Letter of support and supporting documents are optional but can help improve the strength of an application by demonstrating commitment from an institutional buyer in Vermont or local Vermont food producer, highlighting the interest in seeing more local food consumed at a Vermont institution.

SECTION 4: GRANT MANAGEMENT & REPORTING

GRANT AGREEMENT & PAYMENT

Prior to receiving funding, successful applicants must sign a grant agreement with the Vermont Agency of Agriculture, Food & Markets (VAAF) indicating their intent to complete the proposed project and authorizing VAAF to monitor the project's progress. The grant agreement will include provisions (terms and conditions) set by the State of Vermont as well as 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:

1. **A certificate of insurance** consistent with the requirements set forth in Attachment C of the grant agreement (see above);
2. **A current [IRS Form W-9](#)** (Request for Taxpayer Identification Number and Certification), signed within the past six months;
3. **Completed [Act 154 Good Standing Certification](#)**. Find this form at finance.vermont.gov/vendors-and-grantees.
4. **Documentation** verifying pledged matching funds, as applicable.

GRANTEE PAYMENT SCHEDULE

Grant funds will be disbursed in three 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. To be approved by the program manager, each claim must be accompanied by the following deliverables which will be submitted via WebGrants.

1st Claim (60% of total grant award): A fully executed grant agreement

2nd Claim (30% of total grant award): Completion and approval of first Status Report. Due by June 30, 2024

3rd Claim (10% of total award): Completion and approval of Final Report. Due by June 30, 2025

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.

SECTION 4: GRANT MANAGEMENT & REPORTING

Final claims must be submitted within 30 days of the grant end date.

REPORTING REQUIREMENTS

Reports will be submitted through a grantee's WebGrants account. Reports will require the grantee to provide answers to an established list of questions related to the progression of the project, the project budget and the impact to date. A copy of all report questions will be provided to successful grantees with their award packets.

Interim Performance Report- Due June 30, 2024

- Quantitative and qualitative data about their grant project
- Progress made on meeting goals and outcomes.

Final Performance Report – Due June 30, 2025

- Quantitative and qualitative data about their grant project
- Progress made on meeting goals and outcomes
- Description of how grant and matching funds were spent

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

SECTION 4: GRANT MANAGEMENT & REPORTING

\$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.