

VERMONT AGENCY OF AGRICULTURE, FOOD & MARKETS

VISION GRANT

REQUEST FOR APPLICATIONS – FISCAL YEAR 2024

The Vermont Agency of Agriculture, Food & Markets announces the availability of grant funds to support projects that provide educational, experiential or vocational opportunities for Vermont youth (ages 0 – 20) in the areas of agriculture, food systems or related fields. Proposals should address contemporary problems and center Vermont youth in their scope.

KEY DATES

PUBLICATION DATE: FEBRUARY 29, 2024

APPLICANT WEBINAR: MARCH 14, 2024 AT 11 AM - [REGISTRATION INFORMATION](#)

APPLICATION DEADLINE: APRIL 11, 2024 AT 11:59 PM

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CONTACT INFORMATION

PROGRAM QUESTIONS

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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

PROGRAM PURPOSE

The purpose of this grant is to support innovative and impactful initiatives that engage Vermont youth in addressing and learning about issues related to food, agriculture or related fields. Strong proposals will be scalable and/or replicable, will prioritize youth leadership, and will have a high net impact score – defined generally as the number of youths impacted multiplied by the magnitude of the impact per individual.

ELIGIBILITY

The following entities are eligible applicants:

- Vermont schools and school districts
- Licensed and/or registered childcare providers
- Licensed afterschool programs
- Non-profits and community organizations that conduct programming in Vermont are also eligible to apply, but must demonstrate partnership in their application with a school, childcare provider, afterschool program, or other another organization in the Vermont Farm to School and Early Childhood Network.

AVAILABLE FUNDS

A total of \$150,000 is available through this competitive funding opportunity.

MINIMUM & MAXIMUM AWARD

The minimum award is \$5,000 and the maximum award is \$50,000.

PROJECT LENGTH

The project length for this funding opportunity is two years from the execution of the grant agreement.

FUNDING SOURCE

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

FUNDING OPPORTUNITY DESCRIPTION

Farm to school is a broad term. It defines a variety of efforts aimed at educating and engaging children and young adults on the connections that exist between agriculture, nutrition, community and health. This competitive funding opportunity is designed to support projects that engage youth in exploring those connections. We are seeking proposals that address specific challenges related to the interconnections between agriculture, nutrition, community and health.

Applicants will be required, using qualitative and/or quantitative evidence, to identify a farm to school related challenge impacting their community. Applicants will then need to

SECTION 1: OVERVIEW & ELIGIBILITY

demonstrate how they seek to address that challenge through their proposed project. Proposals must center youth in their scope. Strong proposals will:

- Engage multiple community stakeholders
- Prioritize youth leadership and involvement
- Demonstrate a high likelihood of success
- Demonstrate an ability for the project to be easily scaled and/or replicated
- Demonstrate the likelihood of continued impact beyond the grant period
- Demonstrate a high net-impact score:
 - (# of individuals who stand to benefit) X (magnitude of the benefit per individual)

FUNDING PRIORITIES

Priority will be given to projects that utilize farm to school approaches to address contemporary issues impacting communities, agriculture, health, and Vermont youth. Examples include, but are not limited to:

- Climate change
- Agriculture workforce development
- Food security
- Food sovereignty
- Health and nutrition equity
- Racial and social equity

ELIGIBILITY

ELIGIBLE APPLICANTS

- Vermont schools and school districts
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ELIGIBLE PROJECTS

Projects must center Vermont youth in their scope and promote awareness of, and engagement in, issues related to agriculture, nutrition, community and health.

INELIGIBLE PROJECTS

Projects that are primarily designed to benefit an organization, business or industry sector will not be considered for funding.

DOCUMENTATION

SECTION 1: OVERVIEW & ELIGIBILITY

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 are required to provide matching funds equal to 25% of their grant request. Matching funds can be in the form of in-kind services, cash, or a combination of both. Cash match is not a requirement, but proposals that leverage additional funding may be scored more favorably than those that meet the match requirement through in-kind services alone.

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.

KEY DATES

DATES MAY BE SUBJECT TO CHANGE

FEBRUARY 29, 2024 AT 12:00 PM (NOON)	REQUEST FOR APPLICATIONS RELEASED; APPLICATION OPENS IN WEBGRANTS
MARCH 14, 2024 AT 11:00 AM – 12:00 PM	REGISTER FOR APPLICANT WEBINAR
APRIL 11, 2024 AT 11:59 PM	DEADLINE TO SUBMIT APPLICATIONS
LATE APRIL, 2024	APPLICATION REVIEW PERIOD
EARLY MAY, 2024	AWARD ANNOUNCEMENTS MADE
MID-LATE JUNE 2024	ESTIMATED PROJECT START DATE
JUNE 30, 2026	PROJECT END DATE

SECTION 2: APPLICATION

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The following is a complete copy of the application questions. Applications must be submitted online through [WebGrants](#) by **Thursday, April 11, at 11:59 PM**. Application flow and structure may appear differently in the online grants management system than here in this outline.

For help in submitting an application, see the [WebGrants Application Guide](#).

Estimated time to prepare an application, including time to create and collect all required supporting documentation: **3-5 Hours**

Estimated time to complete online application: **1-3 Hours**

STANDARD APPLICATION QUESTIONS

Questions in the Global Application Form are asked of everyone who applies for a grant offered by VAAFMs Agriculture Development Division. Questions marked with an asterisk (*) are required.

Applicant Information

- Which of the following categories best describes the person/people completing this application? Please select all that apply*
- Name*
- Email address*
- Phone number*
- Preferred method of communication*
- Job title*
- How did you hear about this funding opportunity?*

Applicant's Business/Organization Information

Some questions in this section may not apply to your business or organization and are optional.

- Legal name of the organization*
- Business or organization type*
- Street address*
- Town/City*
- County*
- Number of full-time employees, including owner(s)*
- Number of part-time and seasonal employees
- Total number of volunteer hours that benefit your organizations in a typical year
- Years in operation*
- Provide the organization's website if one exists
- Share any social media handles the organization uses

SECTION 2: APPLICATION

- Is the organization a farm, forestry or other land-based operation?*
- If yes, how many acres are currently in production?
- How many acres, if any, are currently in conservation?
- How many acres of leased or rented land does the organization use for production and/or processing?
- Have you applied for or received a grant through the Vermont Agency of Agriculture, Food & Markets in the past five years?*

Optional Business/Organization Information

- What is the applicant business/organization's most recent annual operating budget?
- What is the median hourly wage for all employees?
- Which of the following benefits are provided to you organization's employees and/or volunteers?
- Does the organization hire H-2A farmworkers?

Voluntary Demographic Information

The Vermont Agency of Agriculture, Food and Markets is collecting voluntary demographic information to better serve our constituents and inform the development of future grant programs. Please click the link to be taken to complete this anonymous survey: <https://forms.office.com/g/dp8zqWrgxL>

The demographic survey is hosted through a separate online platform to ensure that any information collected through the survey cannot be linked in any way to your WebGrants application. Funding decisions are based solely on the information provided in your WebGrants application. Any information collected through the demographic survey is anonymous and will only be used to help improve the programming and services offered by the Development Division of the Vermont Agency of Agriculture, Food & Markets.

PROJECT LEADERS AND PARTNERS

- Name, title, e-mail, and phone number for the following individual(s):
 - Grant Authorizing/Financial Management Contact* – the main point of contact for legal and financial grant communications, including submitting claims for grant payments **This person must be associated with the fiscal agent organization*
 - Grant Management Contact – the main point of contact for all grant related communications and project management, including submitting status reports
- Organization Partners:
 - For each organization involved in the proposed project, provide the following information about the total population that the organization serves:

SECTION 2: APPLICATION

- A letter of support from the leadership of the organization
- If a school, early care provider, or afterschool program:
 - Grades/ages served
 - Number of children served
 - If applicable, percentage of children that qualify for free or reduced-price meals
 - If applicable, a list of all federal child nutrition programs in which the organization participates
- Project Team:
 - List all project members who would play key roles in leading, managing and/or overseeing the proposed project. Include their name, organizational affiliation, email address, and a description of their role respective to this project. It is encouraged, but not required, to include a resume for each key project member.
- Do any of the project team members have experience executing similar initiatives?
 - If so:
 - Describe any relevant past experiences
 - What was learned from those previous experiences that will inform this proposal?
- Would any other community members or organizations not previously listed be involved in this project?
 - If so, identify them and describe their involvement

DEMONSTRATION OF NEED

- In five sentences or less, provide a brief summary of your project.
- In five sentences or less, describe the problem this proposal seeks to address.
- Provide any qualitative evidence (observations or personal anecdotes) that demonstrates the impact of the problem and how it manifests in your community. Space is provided to upload testimonials or other supporting documentation.
- Provide any quantitative evidence (statistics, percentages, etc.) that demonstrates the impact of the problem and its effect on your community. Space is provided to upload supporting documentation.
- Are there current efforts, or have there been previous efforts, to address this problem in the community?
 - If so, describe them and comment on their effectiveness
- Are there other organizations or groups currently working to address this problem in your community?
 - If so, will they be collaborating on this project?
 - Describe their role

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- If not, explain why they have not been included as a project partner

PROJECT IMPACT

- Is the proposed project a new initiative, an expansion of an existing initiative, or a continuation of an existing initiative?
 - If the proposed project is an expansion or continuation of an existing initiative, provide information about the history and current status of these efforts.
- Describe the target population for the proposed project. Consider demographics such as age, location, income level, race/ethnicity, etc.
 - How would you recruit or engage the target population?
- Give your best sales pitch. Why is this proposed project the right solution for the problem?
- Provide an estimate for the number of Vermont youths who would be directly impacted by this project
 - How did you arrive at this estimate?
- What is the project's anticipated impact?
- Provide information about any benefits the proposed project may have on individuals, groups or organizations beyond Vermont youth.
- What opportunities would youth have to participate in the design, management and/or implementation of this project? How would their involvement guide the project?
- What are some challenges that could affect the success of this project?
 - How are you prepared to mitigate these challenges?
- Would this project extend beyond the grant period?
 - If so, provide information on how long the project would be expected to last and how it would be sustained.
- What, if anything, would be done to help other communities and/or interested organizations learn from this proposed project?
- Would any resources be developed as part of this proposed project (reports, toolkits, case studies, etc.)?
 - If so, provide a description.
- Would project leaders or partners be willing to volunteer time to help other communities institute similar initiatives?

PROJECT WORKPLAN

Provide a detailed overview of your proposed project. Include information about the project timeline and who would be responsible for completing different project tasks. Use the table below to outline 3-5 key activities or components of your proposed project. For each key activity, identify the individual(s) responsible for the activity, and

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the estimated date range for when the activity will take place. All activities must be able to be accomplished within the two-year grant period.

Key Activity	Responsible Team Member(s)	Expected Date Range for the Activity
<i>Example: Key Activity #1: The Internship Supervisor will work with high schools to select ten students for internships at local farms for Spring 2025 semester.</i>	<i>Example: Internship supervisor will lead with support from Executive Director</i>	<i>Example: October – December 2024</i>

BUDGET

- Amount of grant funding requested (\$)
- How would you meet the 25% match requirement?
 - Cash
 - Are the funds secured at the time of this application submission?
 - If not, describe the process and timeline for securing matching funds
 - In-kind
 - Combination of cash and in-kind
 - Are the cash match funds secured at the time of this submission?
 - If not, describe the process and timeline for securing matching funds
- Complete the following budget table. Be as detailed as possible in the description column, (i.e. hours and wages for personnel, miles and reimbursement rates for travel, explanations for supply and/or equipment costs, etc.)

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Expense Category	Grant Funds Requested	Matching Funds Committed	Total Project Cost	Description
Personnel				
Fringe Benefits				
Travel				
Equipment				
Supplies				
Contractual				
Construction				
Other				
Total				

EVALUATION

- Define what success would look like for this project.
- How would the impact of this project be measured, both during the grant period and beyond?
- Who would be responsible for measuring the impact of the proposed project?
- If the project implementation was not going as well as designed, describe the process for how the project team might respond and/or readjust.

SECTION 3: APPLICATION SCORING CRITERIA

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Applications will be reviewed by a committee, which will include representatives from the Vermont Agency of Agriculture, Food & Markets, the Vermont Farm to School and Early Childhood Network, and others. Each application will be reviewed by three different independent reviewers who will score the application using a common scoring rubric.

Reviewers will consider the following criteria when scoring applications:

Quality of Proposal – 35 points

- Applicant provides a clear overview of the proposed project. Project workplan is detailed and demonstrates how the project would be accomplished.
- Applicant gave honest and thorough consideration to the types of challenges their project may face and they demonstrated a plan to mitigate those challenges. The applicant has a strong plan for responding and/or adjusting to setbacks or unforeseen problems
- Budget is clear, reasonable, justified, and aligns with the proposed grant activities.
- Applicant has a strong plan for measuring program impact.

Program Purpose – 30 points

- Applicant clearly explains and demonstrates the problem they are trying to address.
- The project will have a significant impact on the Vermont youths involved.
- Applicant makes significant effort to prioritize opportunities for youth leadership and involvement in the project.

Innovation and Project Sustainability – 15 points

- Project is scalable and/or replicable.
- Other communities or organizations would likely benefit from this project.
- Project is likely to have an impact beyond the two-year grant period.

Community Engagement – 10 points

- Applicant's plan to recruit or engage the target population is adequate and feasible.
- Application has strong letters of support from partner organization(s) that demonstrate a thorough understanding of the proposed project and a strong commitment to the project goals.

Project Team – 10 points

SECTION 3: APPLICATION SCORING CRITERIA

- Applicant demonstrates that their Project Team has the relevant experience, skills, and expertise to implement the project.

When applications are nearly equivalent in their competitiveness according to the criteria above, the review committee will consider the following:

- The need to disburse funds equitably throughout the state, prioritizing regions that have historically been underserved by previous Farm to School and Early Childhood Grant investments.
- Supporting a combination of projects that address different funding priorities, age groups, and project scales.
- Prioritizing funding to areas identified as food deserts, areas with a low child opportunity index, and areas where a significant amount of adults are living below the federal poverty level, using the [2022 Vermont CACFP Mapping Tool](#) and free and reduced-price meal rates, to advance the food access and food security objectives of this grant program.

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 (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 program-specific requirements. Review [Attachment C - Standard State Provisions and Contracts and Grants](#) (Revised 12/7/2023) 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 payment is initiated by the grantee submitting a claim through their WebGrants account. Information about how to make a claim submission through WebGrants is available [here](#). To be approved by the program manager, each claim must be accompanied by the following deliverables which will be submitted via WebGrants.

1st Claim (45% of total grant award): A fully executed grant agreement.

2nd Claim (45% of total grant award): Completion and approval of first Status Report. Due by June 30, 2025.

3rd Claim (10% of total award): Completion and approval of Final Report. Due by July 30, 2026.

REPORTING REQUIREMENTS

Grantees will submit status reports in [WebGrants](#), according to the schedule below. Status reports must be complete, accurate, and submitted on-time.

Interim Status Report – Due June 30, 2025

The Interim Report requires grantees to provide quantitative and qualitative answers to questions related to their grant activities.

Final Report – Due July 30, 2026

SECTION 4: GRANT MANAGEMENT & REPORTING

The Final Report requires grantees to answer questions related to their grant experience and the impact of the grant.

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.