

VERMONT AGENCY OF AGRICULTURE, FOOD & MARKETS
FARM TO INSTITUTION
MARKET DEVELOPMENT GRANT
REQUEST FOR APPLICATIONS – FISCAL YEAR 2023

The Farm to Institution Market Development Grant (formerly Local Food Market Development Grant) 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

APPLICATION OPENS: October 18, 2023

OPTIONAL APPLICANT WEBINAR: October 26, 2023 at 10 AM – [Register for Webinar](#)

APPLICATION DEADLINE: November 29, 2023 at 11:59 PM

ANTICIPATED PROJECT START DATE: February 2024

PROJECT END DATE: February 2026

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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

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 documents are not required in the application, awarded applicants 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 amount. For example, a \$20,000 grant would require the applicant to contribute at least \$5,000 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 an email notification about their award status. VAAFM staff will provide feedback about applications or award decisions upon request.

KEY DATES

DATES MAY BE SUBJECT TO CHANGE

October 18, 2023 at 12:00 PM (NOON)	Application Opens
October 26, 2023 at 10:00 AM	Register for Optional Applicant Webinar
November 29, 2023 at 11:59 PM	Application Deadline
December 2023	Application Review Period
Beginning of January, 2024	Award Announcements
February 2024	Anticipated Project Start
February 28, 2026	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

SECTION 2: APPLICATION

Below are the required components needed to complete a grant application. **Applications must be completed and submitted online in [WebGrants](#) by November 29, 2023 at 11:59 PM.** Only applications that are fully complete and submitted by the deadline will be considered.

GLOBAL APPLICATION FORM

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
- 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?

SECTION 2: APPLICATION

- 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.

FARM TO INSTITUTION MARKET DEVELOPMENT GRANT APPLICATION FORMS

BUSINESS OR ORGANIZATION INFORMATION

1. Are you applying as a farm business? (Y/N) If yes:
 - Describe the products the farm grows, raises and/or produces
 - 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
2. 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

SECTION 2: APPLICATION

- How is the association funded?
- What is the association's annual operating budget?
- How many businesses/farms does the association support?
- 3. 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?
 - 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
- 4. 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

PROJECT DESCRIPTION AND IMPACT

1. Provide a descriptive title in seven words or fewer
2. Provide a detailed summary of the proposed project
3. How many local food producers would benefit from this project?
4. Identify and briefly describe the local food producers that would benefit from this project, if possible.
5. If this project were successfully completed, estimate the total annual increase in local product sales that would result
6. How many new institutional market relationships would result from this project?
7. Identify and briefly describe the new institutional market relationship(s) expected from this project.
8. How will you track the change in volume and value of local food sales resulting from this project?
9. Will there be any marketing and/or outreach involved with the proposed project? (Y/N) If yes:
 - Describe the marketing and/or outreach strategies
10. 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.

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>

SECTION 2: APPLICATION

<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>
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PROJECT WORK PLAN

Enter at least five project activities into the Project Work Plan table (1000-character limit per field):

- **Project Activity** – List the activities (i.e., milestone tasks) that are necessary to accomplish your project objectives. Include your performance monitoring/data collection activities. If you request funds for travel, these activities must also be included.
- **Personnel/Responsible Parties** – Indicate the project participants who will do the work involved in each activity, including yourself, employees, and/or contractors. Any personnel or contractors referenced in your budget must be included to demonstrate their role and justify associated funds.
- **Estimated Timeline/Completion Date** – Identify your project timeline, including the activity start date and projected completion date. Project activities must be completed within the 24-month grant period ending in February 2026.

Project Activity	Personnel/Responsible Parties	Estimated Timeline/Completion

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 requested grant amount.

1. How much grant funding are you requesting?
2. How much match funding are you contributing?
3. How do you plan to meet the match requirement? (Cash, In-Kind, Combination of Both)
4. 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:
 - Describe how and when the match funding will be secured
5. Is using in-kind services for all or part of your match requirement, describe how you determined the value of these services.

SECTION 2: APPLICATION

6. Provide any additional information about the project budget you think would be helpful for the review committee to know.

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.

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

Expense Category	Grant Request	Match Funds	Match Source	Details/Purpose	Total
Salaries/Wages					
(Personnel)					
Benefits					
Travel					
Supplies					
Contractual					
Other Direct Costs					
Indirect Costs					
Totals					

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 a review committee, which will include representatives from the Vermont Agency of Agriculture, Food, and Markets and other food system stakeholders. The scoring criteria below will be used in the review process for scoring and ranking applications.

SCORING CRITERIA

Market Development Goals and Performance Measures (Up to 50 points)

- Proposed goals and outcomes are relevant to the project, are explained clearly in the proposal, and are realistically achievable within the project period of 24 months.
- Proposal demonstrates that new sales relationships will be established or existing sales relationships will be deepened.
- The project is likely to result in an increase in the value and/or volume of local food sourced by Vermont institutional markets.

Methodology and Timeline (Up to 30 points)

- Work Plan is thorough and outlines reasonable steps toward reaching project goals. This should describe the proposed supply chain partners, market outlets the applicant anticipates reaching, and how these new market relationships will be developed.
- Proposal explains how the applicant will address strategies for achieving financial sustainability and how the project will directly impact producers.
- The applicant can realistically meet all required deliverables and stated objectives within the grant period (24 months).

Budget (Up to 10 points)

- The proposed budget is clear and reflects realistic, well-planned components, including required matching funds. If applicable, quotes for equipment or contractor work are provided to support the proposed budget.

Experience (Up to 10 points)

- Applicant has evidence of successful experience as a producer in direct marketing or as an organization working with the agricultural community in market access and/or development.
- Applicant included a letter of support from a local community partner explaining the applicant's experience, commitment from an institutional buyer in Vermont, or local Vermont food producer highlighting the interest in growing for larger markets.

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 Interim Status Report. Due February 28, 2025.

3rd Claim (10% of total award): Completion and approval of Final Report. Due March 31, 2026.

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 project work, project expenses, and the impact to date. A copy of all report questions will be provided to awarded grantees in advance of status report due dates.

Interim Performance Report – Due February 28, 2025

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

Final Performance Report – Due March 31, 2026

- Quantitative and qualitative data about the 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 insurance 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

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\$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.