

Resilient Food Systems Infrastructure (RFSI) Equipment-Only Grant Opportunity FAQs

Eligible Applicant and Product Types

Q: My business is in the start-up or early phases. Is this eligible?

A: Yes, new and start-up entities are eligible to apply. They must be located in Vermont, be registered with the State, and have a UEI (or pending UEI). The entity must be able to clearly describe business readiness, implementation capacity, and staff ability to effectively manage federal grant funds and reporting. Project outcomes must be demonstrated within the grant period.

Q: Does pro-rating only apply to meat/poultry or to other products that aren't the main focus of the grant, ie old products that are stored that aren't the new expansion the grant is funding.

A: The pro-rating only applies to ineligible items, such as meat, poultry, flowers, etc. Eligible products that aren't the main focus of the grant do not need to be pro-rated.

Q: Is maple syrup eligible for RFSI?

A: Yes, maple syrup would be considered a value-added product and eligible for RFSI funding. Collecting sap is considered farming or production and therefore any equipment to collect sap is ineligible. Storage to hold sap once its collected is eligible.

Q: The information notes that "Vermont food products, including specialty crops..." are allowable. What about specialty crops that are not food for human consumption, such as cut flowers or vegetable starts?

A: Only items that are food for human consumption are eligible. Therefore, only specialty crops that are food products are eligible. Flowers and vegetable starts are not considered food products and thus are ineligible.

Q: If I use RFSI funds to purchase equipment, and in a few years retire and sell my business to a family member, but the business retains its legal name, does the disposition requirements of paying money back come into effect?

A: If the equipment stays within the same business, even if it comes under new ownership, the disposition pay-back is not needed. However, the new owner will need to understand the ongoing requirements for depreciation schedules and the disposition rules.

Q: Do I need to be registered as a business in the State or have my UEI at the time of application submission?

A: You must be registered with the Vermont Secretary of State at the time of application. If you are in

the process of obtaining a UEI but have not yet received one by time of application submission, that is acceptable. Please send us the UEI immediately once you obtain it. We will not be able to process your application until we have received this number, so we highly encourage all applications to sign up for their UEI as soon as possible.

Q: My business is trying to source regionally, but there are not enough ingredients available regionally. Will this make me ineligible?

A: The RFSI grant is truly meant for local and regional products. If the product has non-regional ingredients, it will be ineligible for this grant. If there are minor ingredients that are non-regional, that may be less competitive but still eligible.

Q: Are eggs considered poultry?

A: No, eggs are an allowable product type.

Q: How many years will I need to report on my outcomes?

A: You will only need to report out during the life of the grant, which includes up to 45 days after the close of the grant to report on final outcomes and budget. You will not need to do annual reporting after the grant has closed and the final reports are submitted. However, you will be responsible for tracking equipment depreciation and adhere to the disposition requirements through the life of the equipment, until it reaches less than \$5,000 in value.

Q: What if my business makes both meat and vegetarian product? Is any product that contains local meat excluded?

A: The RFSI program is not meant for meat and poultry. Therefore any products that contain meat must be prorated and the application may be less competitive if it serves both meat and vegetarian products. If you have specific questions about your situation, please reach out to the grant manager.

Q: If I need two pieces of equipment, do I submit one application or two?

A: Businesses should only submit one application. You are able to submit a grant request for multiple pieces of equipment, but those pieces of equipment should be connected in one product and for one food product. For example, if you are a local apple pie company, you would be able to ask for items such as a flour milling equipment, apple cooler for storage, and oven for baking, as those are all related to the apple pie product. However, asking for those items for apple pies and also equipment for a labeling machine for fluid milk, those would be two separate projects and products with different goals and outcomes; we would ask you to choose one project per application.

Q: What if I cannot source all ingredients of a product regionally or locally but use as much as possible?

A: The RFSI intent is for local and regional ingredients. Therefore, an application with only partial local or regional ingredients would be much less competitive. Feel free to reach out to the program manager to speak more directly about your specific situation.

Q: Regarding disposition, if a business is sold to another owner (like an owner retiring and selling to a family member), does that initiate the disposition pay-back?

A: The disposition only comes into play if the legal entity changes or the equipment is sold to another legal entity. Otherwise the new owner is responsible for adhering to all disposition guidelines.

Q: Is any farm production eligible?

A: No, farm production or harvesting equipment is not eligible. This includes equipment to enhance the soil.

Q: Can a nonprofit that distributes food for free be eligible?

A: No, the purpose of the grant is for market development, so that would not be competitive.

Q: If an equipment quote changes after the grant is awarded and is therefore more expensive, is there any way to cover that additional cost?

A: No, unfortunately the grantee would need to cover the difference. Contingency of this sort is unallowable.

Q: Will you award less than the requested funds?

A: We will aim to award the full request. We may award less if there are outstanding circumstances or if we are close to running out of funds on the final approved project.

Q: How do you get quotes for equipment bought on platforms like Craigslist or Facebook Marketplace?

A: It is acceptable to take a screenshot of this. However, the grantee is responsible for ensuring any used equipment is in working condition or it is their responsibility to pay for and integrate in time to get the equipment up and running.

Q: If you complete your project in six months, can you file the final report immediately and get the last 10% sooner, rather than waiting the year?

A: You can file your project up to three months before the end of the grant. However, please note that just installing the equipment is not sufficient to report out on – you will need time that the equipment is working to substantially report out on outcomes and metrics of the new equipment being used.

Q: Does meeting more than one primary or secondary goal make an application more competitive?

A: Yes, it would likely indicate a stronger application as there is more alignment with RFSI goals.

Q: Do products sourced in Vermont make it more competitive than regional sourcing?

A: No, the grants is for both local and regional products. Please note that Canada is not considered regional.

Q: Is the setup of a retail store eligible?

A: No, retail or consumer-facing projects are ineligible.

Q: Is there assistance for applying to this grant?

A: The REDI program can offer grant writing support for farms or food businesses in communities of less than 5,000 people. Please reach directly out to Mariah at mariah@vhcb.org for more information on REDI grant writing support.