

VERMONT AGENCY OF AGRICULTURE, FOOD & MARKETS

TRADE SHOW ASSISTANCE

GRANTS

FISCAL YEAR 2024 REQUEST FOR APPLICATIONS

The Vermont Agency of Agriculture, Food & Markets (VAAFAM)'s Trade Show Assistance Grants provide Vermont agricultural and forestry businesses with funds to exhibit and sell their Vermont products at trade shows targeting out-of-state buyers. These matching grants can partially offset the expenses associated with exhibiting at trade shows, which provide excellent opportunities to network with wholesale buyers and expand into new domestic and international markets.

KEY DATES

REQUEST FOR APPLICATIONS (RFA) RELEASE DATE: November 17, 2023

APPLICATION OPENS: December 1, 2023 at 12:00 PM

APPLICATION DEADLINE: January 15, 2024 at 11:59PM

AWARD NOTIFICATIONS: February 15, 2024

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CONTACT INFORMATION

PROGRAM QUESTIONS

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VAAFAM staff can assist applicants 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 must be submitted through the [WebGrants](#) grants management system.

REGISTRATION

If you're new to WebGrants, submit the [WebGrants Registration Form](#). It usually takes about two business days to process registrations. Make sure to register for an account well before the application deadline.

SUBMISSION POLICY

Applicants must follow all instructions in this RFA, including the dates and times for submitting applications. VAAFAM will only consider the last complete submission through WebGrants before the deadline as the official application. We cannot accept incomplete or late applications after the deadline, barring exceptional circumstances. The WebGrants system will not accept applications after the deadline.

SUBMISSION CONFIRMATION

After you've submitted your application successfully, you'll be taken to a page confirming your submission. This page will have an Application ID number. You'll also get an email confirming your submission.

SECTION 1: OVERVIEW & ELIGIBILITY

PROGRAM PURPOSE

The Vermont Agency of Agriculture, Food & Markets' Trade Show Assistance Grants provide Vermont agricultural and forestry businesses with funds to exhibit and sell their Vermont products at trade shows targeting out-of-state buyers. These matching grants can partially offset the expenses associated with exhibiting at trade shows, which provide excellent opportunities to network with wholesale buyers and expand into new domestic and international markets. Applicants may include up to five trade shows in their yearly marketing plan, requesting a total of between \$2,000 and \$5,000 in eligible reimbursements for shows that take place between April 1, 2024 and March 31, 2025. Businesses may not apply for funding to support attendance at trade shows they have already attended five or more times.

ELIGIBILITY

Vermont-based agricultural and forestry businesses that meet the following criteria are eligible to receive funds through this grant:

1. Business is registered with the Vermont Secretary of State and has been in business for over one year
2. Business or its headquarters are located within Vermont
3. Business has three or more wholesale accounts
4. Business' products meet the [Vermont Local Definition](#) as defined in Act 129

AVAILABLE FUNDS

The Working Lands Enterprise Initiative has set aside \$50,000 to support Vermont businesses to execute their yearly tradeshow marketing plans. Applications will be reviewed through a competitive process. Eligibility does not guarantee funding will be awarded.

MINIMUM & MAXIMUM AWARD

Grantees are required to contribute 50% of costs included in the reimbursement request. For example, if the grantee incurred a total of \$3,000 in eligible expenses at a trade show, their contribution would be \$1,500. Reimbursement will be provided directly to Vermont businesses for marketing materials and exhibiting at eligible events.

- Minimum grant amount: \$2,000
- Maximum grant amount: \$5,000

PROJECT LENGTH

Grants will be awarded for shows taking place between April 1, 2024 and March 31, 2025. Grants may be amended if grantee changes their anticipated trade show marketing plan. If the marketing plan has changed and grantee has not sought an amendment, the changes may not be approved, and claims may be denied.

SECTION 2: APPLICATION

All applications must be submitted via the WebGrants system at agriculturegrants.vermont.gov. Applications will be accepted December 1, 2023 at 12:00 PM – January 15, 2024 at 11:59 PM.

Be advised that technical assistance with WebGrants may not be available shortly before deadlines; please plan accordingly.

ELIGIBLE APPLICANTS

Vermont based agricultural and forestry businesses that meet the following criteria are eligible to receive funds through this grant:

1. Business is registered with the Vermont Secretary of State and has been in business for over one year
2. Business or its headquarters are located within Vermont
3. Business has three or more wholesale accounts
4. Business' products meet the [Vermont Local Definition](#) as defined in Act 129

Trade Show Assistance Grants can help offset costs associated with exhibiting at trade shows and provide an excellent opportunity to network with wholesale buyers and expand into new domestic and international markets. Applicants should outline all trade show marketing activities for the upcoming year for which they seek reimbursement.

ELIGIBLE PROPOSALS

Eligible proposals must assert that:

- Proposed trade show(s) target out-of-state buyers. Typically, trade shows based in Vermont would not be eligible. However, there are exceptions in which regional, or even international trade shows happen to be held here. These shows are eligible if they meet the other requirements in this RFA. Please contact the grant program manager with questions.
- Applicant has previously attended trade show no more than 4 times. This grant will fund up to 5 years of attendance at a single trade show.
- The proposed budget demonstrates a minimum of a 1:1 cash match contribution. This grant will reimburse eligible costs for each trade show up to 50%.
- Proposed trade show is in the business to business (wholesale) format. Direct to consumer shows are not eligible for TSAG funding.
- Funding will be used for the following approved expenses:
 - Travel and accommodation expenses
 - Marketing assets and booth design
 - Registration fees (including booth space and educational sessions)
 - Booth fees including furnishings and utilities

- Shipping/freight
- Other marketing costs (samples, printing, etc.)

INELIGIBLE PROPOSALS

- Proposals to attend any show for which the applicant has already secured funding from the Food Export Northeast Branded Program, the Northeast Dairy Business Innovation Center, the Vermont State Trade Expansion Program (STEP), or any other State of Vermont grant program.
- Proposals from applicants who are out of compliance with any federal, state, or local laws or regulations.
- Proposals from applicants failing to meet requirements for previous VAAFM grants and/or assistance programs, or from individuals or groups that were unable to perform or had performance issues with previous grant obligations with VAAFM.
- Proposals from applicants whose products do not meet the [Vermont Local Definition](#) as defined in Act 129.
- Reimbursement requests that include labor, food, and/or beverage.
- Proposals for trade shows that have been completed prior to 4/1/2024 or take place after March 31, 2025.

APPLICATION QUESTIONS

GLOBAL APPLICATION FORM:

The following four sections are included in all Agricultural Development Division grant applications. Questions marked with * are required.

1. 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?*

2. 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?
 - 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 5 years?*

3. 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?
- Does the organization provide any of the following benefits to its employees and/or volunteers?
- Does the organization hire H-2A farmworkers?

4. 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.

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.

FY24 APPLICANT INFORMATION:

1. Organization Information

- Are you registered with the Vermont Secretary of State, have you been in business for over one (1) year, and do you have an address indicating that you perform substantial business functions in Vermont?*
- By checking this box, I self-certify that I am in compliance with state regulations and in good standing with the State of Vermont*
- Enter the Vermont Secretary of State Business ID for your business*

- Briefly describe your business and products*

2. Marketing Strategy

- Current Geographic Markets*
- Current Buyers*
- How many wholesale accounts do you have?*
- How many distributors carry your product?*
- Please attach your wholesale and distributor price list*
- Do you have a product order form?*
 - Please attach your product order form here*
- Please describe your business's current marketing strategy (i.e. markets, distributors, target customers, goals, etc.)*
- Please check the areas where you would most benefit from technical assistance if the opportunity were available?

3. Sales and Employees

- 2022 Gross Sales*
- 2023 Projected Gross Sales*
- 2024 Projected Gross Sales*
- Are you currently exporting your product?*
- Have you worked with Food Export Northeast?*
 - Briefly describe the support you have received from Food Export Northeast*

4a. Ingredient Sourcing – Part 1

- Do your products meet the Vermont Local Definition as defined in Act 129?*
- Please elaborate on why you do or do not feel your products meet the definition, detail if some do and some do not, etc.*

4b. Ingredient Sourcing – Part 2

- Please list all ingredients sourced from Vermont businesses, including any ingredients that you grow or harvest yourself. Include the total dollar value you typically purchase of this product in a year.*

FY24 TRADE SHOW MARKETING PLAN:

Trade Show Information

- Describe your strategy for engaging with buyers and collecting leads while exhibiting at the trade show(s)*
- Describe your system for following up with prospective leads once you return home from the trade show(s)*
- How many trade shows would you like to include in your 2024 marketing plan?*

Trade Show 1

- Trade Show Name*
- This grant will fund up to 5 years of attendance at a single trade show. How many times have you attended this show in the past?*
- Trade Show Start Date*
- Trade Show End Date*
- Trade Show City*
- Trade Show – State, Province, or International*
- Trade Show Website*
- Types of Buyers at Trade Show*
- Trade Show Target Market*
- Describe how this trade show fits into your current marketing strategy*
- Describe your goals and objectives for attending this show. What will make this a success and a worthwhile investment?*

Repeat if applicable for Trade Shows 2-5

FY24 BUDGET AND NARRATIVE:

1. Budget

- Enter line item cost for the trade show(s) for which you are applying. If you are applying for only one show, you may leave the other show entries blank. Please fill out your total estimated costs to the best of your ability. Only include eligible costs in these estimates.*

2. Grant Request Validation

- Enter the Grant Request amount from the budget above. If it is above the \$5,000 maximum, enter \$5,000 here. You will not be able to save this form with a number greater than \$5,000. Remember that your grant request cannot equal more than 50% of your total budget.*

3. Budget Narrative

- Enter the total number of trade shows for which you are applying*
- Are you seeking funding from any other sources to attend the above-mentioned trade show(s)?*
 - If "yes," what are the other funding sources?*

Trade Show 1

- Please provide additional information on any expenses listed for trade show 1 (or your only trade show) that are not self-explanatory and/or included in the budget. If there is no additional information to provide, you must enter "N/A" or this form will not save.*

Repeat if applicable for Trade Shows 2-5

VAAF/ANR WATER QUALITY CERTIFICATION:

1. State Water Quality Compliance Certification

- As the official designated authority for this application, this is to certify that our organization, business, or supervisory union is currently in “good standing” with the Agency of Natural Resources and the Agency of Agriculture, Food & Markets.*
- Please complete and attach the corresponding Act 154 Good Standing Certification form*

RISK ASSESSMENT:

1. Trade Show Risk Assessment

- Have you received a trade show grant in the past?*
- Do you have adequate and qualified staff to comply with the terms of the grant?*
- Do you have an accounting system that will allow you to completely and accurately track expenses related to this award?*
- Did your organization have one or more audit findings in your last audit regarding significant internal control deficiency?*

APPLICATION REVIEW

Applications will be reviewed by a committee of State of Vermont employees and industry professionals.

KEY DATES

Key dates are subject to change.

November 17, 2023	Request for Applications released
December 1, 2023 – January 15, 2024	Application submission period
January 15, 2024 at 11:59 PM	Application closes
February 15, 2024	Notification of awards

SECTION 3: APPLICATION SCORING CRITERIA

Applicants may include up to five trade shows in their yearly trade show marketing plan, requesting a total of between \$2,000 and \$5,000 in eligible reimbursements.

Applications will be evaluated based on the following criteria:

- The business, trade show(s), products, and expected costs fall within the eligibility requirements listed in this RFA
- Demonstrated readiness to market product, secure leads, and follow up with wholesale buyers
- The overall potential impact of the trade show(s) to the business
- The overall potential impact of the business' attendance at trade show(s) to the Vermont economy.

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 indicating their intent to complete the proposed project and authorizing VAAFM 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) for the most recent State of Vermont provisions.

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

- I. 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].
- II. A current [IRS Form W-9](#) (Request for Taxpayer Identification Number and Certification), signed within the past six months [not required if grantee is already a state vendor].
- III. A completed [Act 154 Good Standing Certification](#).
- IV. Documentation verifying pledged matching funds, as applicable.

REPORTING REQUIREMENTS AND PAYMENT SCHEDULE

Grantees will be eligible to submit claims for reimbursement upon approval of post-show reports according to the following schedule:

- **October 1, 2024 – October 31, 2024:** Reporting period for all shows attended between April 1, 2024 and September 30, 2024
- **April 1, 2025 – April 30, 2025:** Reporting period for all shows attended between October 1, 2024 and March 31, 2025.

Please note that this means there are just two reporting periods during the year. Grantees should not rely on immediate reimbursement of funds to attend trade shows.

Reports must be submitted online in the WebGrants system and must include verification that the marketing activities have been completed, photo documentation showing proof of activities, and relevant data associated with attendance at the various trade shows, such as number and value of both leads and sales. Grantees will be required to submit receipts, proof of purchases, or other documents for all relevant trade show expenses for which they wish to be reimbursed. Information submitted in any report to the Agency will be a public record. Financial information may only be reported in aggregate.

APPENDIX

RELATED FUNDING OPPORTUNITIES

[Food Export Northeast Branded Program](#)

Through Exporter Education, Market Entry, and Market Promotion strategies, Food Export–Northeast can help your company understand and discover new exporting opportunities by providing 50% reimbursement for costs incurred to execute eligible marketing and promotional activities. These services are made possible through funding from the Foreign Agricultural Service (FAS) of the USDA.

AGENCY OF AGRICULTURE FUNDING OPPORTUNITIES & RESOURCES FOR BUSINESSES

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

CERTIFICATE OF INSURANCE

A certificate of insurance (COI) is a common requirement for businesses and organizations receiving state funds; 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 current or 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.

PUBLIC INFORMATION

Except for grantee proprietary and personal identifying data, as provided under 1 V.S.A. § 317(c), grantee names, projects, the amount of grant awards, and all other information regarding Trade Show Assistance Grants are considered public information and may be subject to disclosure.