

# VERMONT AGENCY OF AGRICULTURE, FOOD & MARKETS

## VERMONT BUILDING AT THE BIG E

### FISCAL YEAR 2024 REQUEST FOR APPLICATIONS

The Vermont Agency of Agriculture, Food & Markets (VAAFAM) is pleased to invite Vermont businesses to apply to vend inside the Vermont Building at the 2024 Big E. The Vermont Building is one of six New England buildings on the Avenue of the States at the Big E, a 17-day fair and exposition which takes place each September in West Springfield, MA. During this event, which brings in approximately 1.6 million people each year, the Vermont Building hosts a variety of Vermont food and retail businesses which showcase the best of what our state has to offer.

### KEY DATES

**REQUEST FOR APPLICATIONS (RFA) RELEASE DATE:** January 19, 2024

**APPLICATION OPENS:** February 2, 2024 at 12:00 PM

**APPLICATION DEADLINE:** March 17, 2024 at 11:59 PM

**VENDOR INVITATIONS:** April 15, 2024

**2024 BIG E:** September 13 – September 29, 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 goals of the State for the Vermont Building are:**

1. To provide a safe, positive experience for fairgoers and vendors.
2. To offer a diversity of products that are unique, high-quality and representative of Vermont's culture, history, and values.
3. To support Vermont businesses in expanding market access and increasing brand recognition.
4. To promote Vermont as a destination for tourists and people looking to relocate to the state.
5. To meet commission revenue targets in order to support costs associated with building management, maintenance, and improvements.

## **ELIGIBILITY**

Any business or organization will be considered that is registered with the Vermont Secretary of State, has been in business for over one year, and is in good standing with the State of Vermont.

## **PRODUCT PRIORITIES**

Vermont Agency of Agriculture, Food & Markets has identified the following product priorities for the Vermont Building for 2024:

1. Products that use Vermont-sourced ingredients and/or materials
2. Vermont-made pottery
3. Children's toys and games
4. Glass products
5. Producer associations interested in representing a variety of producers from their industry
6. Products that showcase the diversity of producers within the state
7. Products that align with regional/national trends

## **COST TO PARTICIPATE**

Vendors will owe a commission on all sales made at the Big E, payable to Vermont Agency of Agriculture, Food & Markets.

## **BOOTH INFORMATION**

There are booth spaces for the entirety of the 17-day fair, for 8-9 day rotating spots, and occasionally for 5-7 days. While most booths are inside, there are additional spaces on the grounds for products deemed an appropriate fit. Booths vary significantly – including in size, shape, available infrastructure, and access to utilities. We will also be accepting applications from food trucks who would like to set up outside of the Vermont Building.

### **Harvest New England Day**

Businesses interested in trying their product out at the Big E without a multi-day commitment are encouraged to first participate by vending at Harvest New England Day, a single day, farmers' market-style event on the lawn of the Vermont Building. There is no fee to participate at this level.

The application process is separate from this multi-day vendor application and will open in Spring 2024. Please subscribe to our weekly [Vermont Ag Bulletin](#) for updates. Contact Kristen Brassard at [kbrassard@vermontfair.com](#) for more information.

Event Date: September 27, 2024

Application Period: May 1 – June 14, 2024

## **BOOTH DESIGN**

Vendors are responsible for programming and decorating their own space. Each booth space is different and should be treated as a retail space rather than a tradeshow space. VAAFM will provide design parameters, layout information, and photos of the booth space for new vendors to plan ahead of time. Any existing components of the booth shall remain within the booth space during the Big E (counters, shelving, etc.). New vendors (without a multi-year contract) should abide by a “pack in, pack out” policy (no painting walls, affixing shelves to walls, etc.). Returning vendors will need to gain approval for any booth alterations.

VAAFM offers a few opportunities for vendors to visit the Vermont Building and work on their booth design ahead of the event.

## **IMPORTANT VENDOR INFORMATION**

- The Vermont Building is open to the public from 10:00 AM – 9:00 PM each day of the fair. Vendors are contractually obligated to remain open and adequately staffed for the entirety of each day for the duration of the event.
- Deliveries may be made each morning and evening at designated times only.
- Daily gross sales reports are to be submitted via an online form provided by VAAFM by 11:00 AM the following day.
- Vendors are required to have an electronic point of sales system.
- Vendors are responsible for providing their own equipment, with the exception of sinks and hoods. Vendors will be responsible for outlining all necessary cooking

equipment to be approved by the state. Equipment should use gas and not electric whenever possible.

## **AMENITIES PROVIDED TO VENDORS**

- Limited free tickets and parking for booth staff, within reason and according to parameters set by the Big E.
- Power:
  - The electrical system for the Vermont Building is currently undergoing upgrades. Vendors offering prepared foods may be affected by this and will need to work with building managers to discuss the power limitations of the booth space and determine the equipment that will work within the available electrical parameters.
- Potable water is available in some booth locations, but not all.
- Access to staff kitchen and break area
- Storage:
  - Dry Storage: Limited space is available within the Vermont Building for dry storage. Space is allocated based on how many vendors request it each year and will be assigned ahead of the fair. This storage is not secure, is on the second floor, and is accessed via a stairway.
  - Refrigeration/Freezer: VAAFM provides a service to vendors by offering freezer and cooler space at no cost. Space is allocated based on how many vendors request it, projected sales of business, and size/type of products sold. Space is at a premium and is not meant to hold all products for vendors for the duration of their stay. Additional off-site options are available nearby.
  - Dead storage may be available through the Big E for on-grounds, long-term parking of larger vehicles or trailers. No electrical access is available.

## **SECTION 2: APPLICATION**

All applications must be submitted via the WebGrants system at [agriculturegrants.vermont.gov](https://agriculturegrants.vermont.gov). Applications will be accepted February 2, 2024 at 12:00 PM – March 17, 2024 at 11:59 PM.

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

### **ELIGIBLE APPLICANTS**

Any business or organization will be considered that is registered with the Vermont Secretary of State, has been in business for over one year, and is in good standing with the State of Vermont.

# 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 BASIC BUSINESS INFORMATION:

- Is your legal business name different from your public facing business name?  
*This is legally known as your 'doing business as' or DBA business title*
  - Enter Your DBA name:
- Is your business registered with the Vermont Secretary of State?
  - Enter the Vermont Secretary of State Business ID for your business.
- Does your business perform substantial business functions in Vermont?
- Do you self-certify that you are in compliance with state regulations and in good standing with the State of Vermont?
- Have you been in business for more than one (1) year?
- Describe your business in 3-5 sentences.
- How many Full Time Equivalents (FTEs) does your business employ in Vermont?

#### Business Contact:

- Primary Onsite person's name. *This is the person who would be the primary point of contact during the fair.*
- Onsite person's email
- Onsite person's cell phone
- Is this the person who will sign your business' Big E contract?
  - Point person for contract (first name, last name)
  - Contract person's email
  - Contract person's phone

#### Products:

- Vendor Type: Food/Retail
- Briefly describe the products you intend to sell at the Big E.
- Why will your products appeal to Big E attendees?
- Please upload your full proposed menu/product list, highlighting any locally sourced products used.
- Are you applying as a food truck?
  - Please describe your energy needs and utility requirements. Do you require a water hookup and/or use of propane? How much electricity does

your truck draw? How many appliances do you typically operate and what power source do they use? Please provide as much detail as possible.

- What is the total footprint of your truck/trailer (height, width, length)?
- Please upload a photo of your complete food truck set up.

### **Ingredient Sourcing:**

- Please list all ingredients sourced from Vermont businesses, including any ingredients that you grow or harvest yourself. Include the annual dollar value of these products.
- Please share any additional information related to your sourcing that you think is relevant to our effort to promote Vermont products and strengthen the Vermont brand

### **FY24 BOOTH INFORMATION:**

- VAAFM will offer booth space based on availability. Please rank your preference for the Various booth spaces below. We will do our best to accommodate your request.
  - Indoor: 17 days
  - Indoor: 8-9 days
  - Indoor: 5-7 days
  - Outdoor Food Truck: 17 Days

### **Food/Beverage Electrical Needs:**

The Vermont Building has limited power. We do our best to accommodate all vendors and their electricity needs. Please note, vendors are responsible for providing all their own equipment, with the exception of sinks and hoods. Vendors will be responsible for outlining all necessary cooking equipment to be approved by the state. Equipment should use gas and not electric whenever possible.

- Do you wish to prepare food/beverages onsite at the Big E?
- Please download the electrical equipment manifest to detail the spec of any equipment proposed for your booth

### **FY24 MARKETING AND OUTREACH:**

- Have you vended in the Vermont Building in the past three years?

### **New Vendors:**

- Why are you interested in participating in the Big E?
- What similar event experience do you have to demonstrate capacity to exhibit at the Big E?
- How will you leverage the Big E as a marketing opportunity?
- How will you communicate with your Big E customers post-fair?
- What strategies do you use to showcase your products at shows/fairs) i.e. (tasting, demonstrations, etc.)?



### **Returning Vendors:**

- Why are you interested in returning to the Big E?
- Please articulate how and why this opportunity has supported the growth of your business.
- What strategies do you employ to reach your Big E customers post-fair?
- How do you plan to improve the appeal of your booth and customer experience this year?
- Are you interested in a multi-year contract to vend in the Vermont Building?
- If granted a multi-year contract to vend at the Vermont Building, what steps will you take to make your space more energy efficient, including replacement of older appliances?
- Please upload a photo of your booth space

### **Market Channels:**

- What tools do you use to communicate with your existing customers? Select all that apply.
  - If you answered “Other,” please describe.
- Describe your business’ marketing strategy.
- How does the opportunity to vend at the Vermont Building fit in with your long-term business goals?

## **APPLICATION REVIEW**

All applications will be reviewed by a committee made up of Vermont Building staff and representatives of multiple Vermont state agencies.

## **INVITATIONS**

Invitations will be extended to applicants chosen through the review process. VAAFM building managers will negotiate any specific conditions or alterations to products/menus, equipment, etc. directly with the vendor. Following any negotiations, contracts between VAAFM and the vendor will be drafted.

## **KEY DATES**

Key dates are subject to change.

<b>January 19, 2024</b>	<b>Request for Applications released</b>
<b>February 2, 2024 – March 17, 2024</b>	Application submission period
<b>March 17, 2024 at 11:59 PM</b>	Application closes
<b>April 15, 2024</b>	Vendor invitations
<b>Summer TBD</b>	Onsite vendor meeting and construction days
<b>September 9 - 12, 2024</b>	Vermont Building open for vendor set up
<b>September 13 - 29, 2024</b>	2024 Big E
<b>September 30 – October 1, 2024</b>	Vermont Building open for vendor pack out

## SECTION 3: APPLICATION SCORING CRITERIA

All applications will be reviewed by a committee made up of Vermont Building staff and representatives of multiple Vermont state agencies. Reviewers will consider the following about each applicant:

- Are the proposed products distinct from other products offered in the Vermont Building?
- Do the proposed products meet the needs of the Vermont Building for the upcoming year?
- Is the company headquartered in Vermont?
- How many jobs/FTE's does the company support in Vermont?
- Does the product use Vermont-sourced ingredients where applicable?
- How well does this company represent the Vermont brand?
- Are similar products already sold at the Big E?
- Are the proposed products readily available in other retail locations in the area?
- How does vending at the Big E fit with the business' long term marketing strategy?
- Is there a clear plan for follow up with Big E consumers?
- Returning vendors will also be assessed on sales made in past years at the fair, interest in product from fairgoers, and their conduct with other vendors and Vermont building staff.

## SECTION 4: CONTRACT MANAGEMENT

### CONTRACT AND PAYMENT

Successful applicants must sign a contract with the Vermont Agency of Agriculture, Food & Markets indicating their intent to vend under the specific terms negotiated with building managers. The contract will include provisions (terms and conditions) set by the State of Vermont as well as any booth and/or vendor-specific requirements. Review [Attachment C - Standard State Provisions and Contracts and Grants](#) (12/7/2023 Revised).

Prior to signing of contract, vendor must submit:

- A certificate of insurance consistent with the requirements set forth in Attachment C of the grant agreement.
- 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.] Please refer to the [W-9 Instructions](#) in order to accurately complete your W-9.

## **COMMISSION PAYMENT SCHEDULE**

Following the close of the fair for the season, VAAFMM will generate a full sales report based on the daily gross sales reported by the vendor. Vendors will receive an invoice from VAAFMM with commission due.

## **PUBLIC INFORMATION**

Except for vendor proprietary and personal identifying data, as provided under 1 V.S.A. § 317(c), vendor names, projects, the amount of contract payments, and all other information regarding Vermont Building Vendors are considered public information and may be subject to disclosure.

# APPENDIX

## RELATED FUNDING OPPORTUNITIES

VAAFAM offers a menu of funding opportunities as well as business planning and assistance resources available to the Vermont agricultural community. View our [Funding Opportunity Calendar](#) to find out more about available funding opportunities and sign up for the [Vermont Ag Bulletin](#) for weekly updates on new opportunities.

## 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.