

**WORKING LANDS ENTERPRISE INITIATIVE**

**Business Enhancement Grant**

**FISCAL YEAR (FY) 2025 REQUEST FOR APPLICATIONS**

Grants to support Vermont working lands businesses.

**KEY DATES**

**APPLICATION OPENING DATE:** October 18, 2024

**APPLICANT WEBINAR:** October 24, 2024 from 11am-12pm - [register](#)

**APPLICATION DROP IN Q&A:** Virtual drop-in Q&A is available to discuss eligibility questions, clarifying questions about the application, and questions about using WebGrants. During any of the times listed below, [use this link to join the meeting on Microsoft Teams](#) or dial by phone at 802-828-7667, 214399072#.

- Monday, October 28, 3-4pm
- Friday, November 8 & 15, 10-11am
- Tuesday, November 26, 3-4pm
- Thursday, December 5 & 12, 10-11am

**GRANT PROJECT PLANNING:** Beginning October 18<sup>th</sup>, optional assistance with grant project planning is available on a first-come, first-serve basis. Contact Clare Salerno at [Clare.Salerno@vermont.gov](mailto:Clare.Salerno@vermont.gov) to confirm grant eligibility and be referred to a business advisor from the Vermont Farm & Forest Viability Program.

**APPLICATION DEADLINE:** December 12, 2024 at 11:59pm

**APPLICANT NOTIFICATION:** Late February 2025

**PROJECT DATES:** April 2025 - March 2026 (final grant report due April 30, 2026)

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## CONTACT INFORMATION

### PROGRAM QUESTIONS

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802-917-2637

### WEBGRANTS TECHNICAL ASSISTANCE

Rebecca Brockett  
Grants Management Specialist  
[Rebecca.Brockett@vermont.gov](mailto:Rebecca.Brockett@vermont.gov)  
802-636-7016

Agency of Agriculture, Food & Markets 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 request for applications (RFA), including the dates and times for submitting applications. The Agency of Agriculture, Food & Markets 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

[Vermont Act 142](#) of 2011 created the Working Lands Enterprise Initiative (WLEI) and the Working Lands Enterprise Board (WLEB). WLEB's vision is that our shared working landscape is the foundation of Vermont's evolving culture, vibrant economies, healthy ecosystems, and sense of place. WLEB's mission is to make strategic investments and develop policy recommendations that support a sustainable farm, food, and forest economy in Vermont.

The [Working Lands Enterprise Board](#) (WLEB) is made up of:

- Farmers, forestry business owners, and people working for farm, forest, and food system organizations
- Leadership and staff from the VT Agency of Agriculture, Food, & Markets; VT Department of Forests, Parks & Recreation; and VT Agency of Commerce and Community Development
- Vermont Economic Development Authority staff
- Vermont Housing & Conservation Board staff
- Vermont Sustainable Jobs Fund staff

## GRANT COMPETITIVENESS

Every year, there is far more demand for WLEB grants than there are funds available. Over the past two grant cycles, approximately 19% of the total requested funds were awarded. Applicants should expect that the project will either be awarded or not based on the content included in the application and in attachments; clarifying conversations with grantees are not currently a part of the grantmaking process. Only in rare cases is a project awarded a partial grant award that is less than the funds requested.

## AVAILABLE FUNDS

\$620,000 is available to award

## MINIMUM & MAXIMUM AWARD

\$10,000-\$50,000

No matching funds are required for this grant.

## PROJECT LENGTH

12 months (April 2025-March 2026)

## FUNDING SOURCE

State of Vermont legislative appropriation

## **ELIGIBLE APPLICANTS**

This grant is for Vermont working lands businesses/organizations, which include farm and forest products businesses. Some food businesses/organizations, as well as agriculture or wood processing and/or distribution businesses can be eligible if they meet the requirements below. Any food, processing, or distribution applicant must make their Vermont product sourcing clear in the application.

Due to limited funds available, this year the Business Enhancement Grant is focused on working landscape businesses producing food, fiber, and forest/wood products. Please see the bullets below for further eligibility guidelines. If more funds are available in future years, agricultural businesses and projects related to non-food and fiber products may be eligible for funding.

### **Farms Producing Food & Fiber Products**

- Farms within agricultural sectors producing food (for animal or human consumption) and/or fiber products are eligible: hay and forage crops; hemp grown outdoors for fiber or ingestible CBD products; herbs; honey; hops; fruit; legumes; livestock for dairy, meat, and/or fiber; poultry; maple; nut trees; mushrooms grown outdoors; vegetables; and viticulture. Any size farm in these sectors is eligible.
- Because this grant is focused on food and fiber agricultural products, projects related to the following sectors are NOT eligible: cannabis; Christmas trees; equine; flowers; hemp grown for topical CBD products; and horticulture crops.
- Businesses that exclusively grow food or other agricultural products indoors (such as hydroponics, aquaculture, or indoor mushroom production) are NOT eligible. These business types often are eligible for other grants or services, so please review the [Agency of Agriculture, Food & Markets grants](#) and the [additional grants and financial assistance](#) pages.

### **Forest Product Businesses**

- Logging businesses, sawmills, firewood producers, or any other primary forestry business that uses Vermont-grown logs, pulpwood, veneer, wood chips, bark, pilings, etc. are all eligible.
- Secondary wood businesses, such as woodworkers or manufacturers, pellet mills, etc. are eligible. Secondary wood businesses will be asked to identify the species mix of wood and the known origin of wood products used by the business. Secondary wood businesses that source more wood from Vermont will receive higher scores than those that do not source wood from Vermont. Businesses will need to estimate the percent and dollar value of wood sourced from within and outside Vermont.
- Wood product trucking and distribution businesses that transport Vermont-produced wood products are eligible. To be competitive, businesses will need to provide the percent and dollar value of Vermont-produced wood products distributed.

## Agricultural Processing, Distribution, and Food Businesses

- Value-added food or fiber businesses that source at least 50% of raw ingredients from Vermont OR are applying for a Working Lands grant to significantly increase use of ingredients sourced from Vermont to at least 50% are eligible. Businesses need to provide the percent, dollar value, and source of Vermont-produced ingredients.
- Businesses that produce “unique food products” are NOT eligible unless the business will use grant funds to increase production of raw ingredients in Vermont. Unique food products are defined as processed food made from ingredients that are not regularly produced in Vermont or are not available in sufficient quantities to meet production requirements.
- Agricultural product trucking and distribution businesses that transport Vermont-produced food and/or fiber products are eligible. This includes both non-profit food hubs and for-profit distribution businesses that are focused on strengthening the agricultural Vermont supply chain. To be competitive, businesses will need to provide the percent, dollar value, and source of Vermont-produced food and/or fiber products distributed.
- Retail businesses that primarily sell Vermont-produced food and/or fiber products are eligible. To be competitive, businesses will need to provide the percent, dollar value, and source of Vermont-produced food and/or fiber products sold.

## Eligibility of Past Grant Recipients for FY25 Business Enhancement Grant

Grant Name and Fiscal Year (FY)	Eligible
FY24 Working Lands Business Enhancement Grantees	No
FY24 Small Farm Diversification & Transition Grant	No
FY24 Agriculture Development Grant	No
FY23 or FY24 ARPA Primary Producer Impact Grant	No
FY22, FY23, or FY24 Supply Chain Impact Grant	No
FY23 or earlier Business Enhancement Grant	Yes
FY22 Meat Slaughter & Processing Development Grant	No
FY22 or earlier Standard Business Grant	Yes
FY21 or earlier Supply Chain Impact Grant	Yes
FY20 COVID-19 Business Response Grant	Yes

Previous grantees who apply again must explain how the proposed project either builds on previous work or is a separate project. Past grantees should demonstrate how continued funding will be used to improve the project or business.

### **Additional Applicant Eligibility**

Applicant organizations/businesses should be based in Vermont. Businesses or organizations headquartered outside of VT may be eligible if the project being proposed is 100% focused on Vermont's working landscape. Please contact [Clare.Salerno@vermont.gov](mailto:Clare.Salerno@vermont.gov) to discuss eligibility for out-of-state applicants.

All structures are eligible (e.g., Partnerships, Limited Liability Corporations, Sole Proprietorships, Cooperatives, Corporations, S Corporations, L3Cs, B Corporations, and/or non-profits). All legally incorporated enterprises must be registered with the Vermont Secretary of State. Sole proprietors using a business name other than their own name must have their assumed business name (formerly known as a trade name) registered with the Secretary of State.

Applicants must be in compliance with all state regulations (including but not limited to water quality, taxes, and child support) and in good standing with the State of Vermont at the time of applying and must remain so during the entire grant period.

Any stage of business is eligible. Applicants must include financial statements from the past year, so new businesses that do not have statements going back that far will be asked to further demonstrate strong business management skills and evidence of strong business planning.

## **ELIGIBLE PROJECTS**

Projects eligible for funding may relate to one or more of the following categories:

- **Infrastructure development** – project-specific planning, permitting, engineering or architectural plans; building and equipment costs, including labor; may include equipment installation and/or technical assistance costs. For this year (FY25), farmworker housing projects are NOT eligible. In the past, farmworker housing projects were funded through a one-time special allocation from the legislature. If more funds are available in the future, farmworker housing may become eligible again.
- **Market development** – professionalizing a marketing and/or branding approach to new or expanded markets; hiring a professional marketing/branding contractor to develop strategy and/or content; implementing the strategy and/or content developed by the contractor (e.g., branding, website, or social media development).
- **Research and development** – testing new systems or technology, including purchasing new animal genetics and new root, seed, or nursery stock.
- **Workforce training and development** – technical skill training for staff.

Purchases of land or animals are NOT eligible under this grant.

General business advising and planning expenses are NOT eligible. Businesses can enroll in business planning through [a variety of free and low-cost services and programs](#).

In addition, projects that primarily include an ongoing, recurring cost of doing business are NOT eligible. Examples of cost of doing business projects include applications where more than half of the proposed budget is one or more of the following:

- Cost of Goods Sold (COGS; e.g. buying animal feed or supplies such as packaging or ingredients)
- General labor, benefits, or accounting costs
- Repair/maintenance of dilapidated equipment that is critical to business operations and should be regularly serviced or maintained
- Utility bills

WLEB strongly recommends that anyone needing energy efficiency upgrades or projects specifically focused on renewable energy should instead apply for the [USDA Rural Energy for America Program \(REAP\)](#). While REAP is competitive and requires matching funds from the business, there is significantly more money available through REAP than through WLEI. REAP applications are accepted on a rolling basis. REAP can fund many energy-related projects, such as lighting, refrigeration/cooling, heat pumps, solar panels, low-energy water management, ventilation systems, and/or energy generation. Free grant writing support for REAP is available for many farms through Farm Credit East. Contact Heather LaPierre for more information ([Heather.LaPierre@farmcrediteast.com](mailto:Heather.LaPierre@farmcrediteast.com)).



## SECTION 2: APPLICATION

### HOW TO APPLY

Applications must be submitted via the online grants management system, [WebGrants](#), at [agriculturegrants.vermont.gov](#) between Friday, October 18, 2024 and Thursday, December 12, 2024 at 11:59 PM. We encourage you to submit your application early as WebGrants support will not be available after 4:00 PM on December 12, 2024. Paper applications will not be accepted. Application components are outlined below as they will appear in WebGrants. For technical instructions on the application submission process, please see the [WebGrants Application Guide](#).

### STANDARD VAAFM APPLICATION QUESTIONS

Questions in the following five sections are asked of all applicants seeking grant funding through Vermont Agency of Agriculture, Food & Market's (VAAFMM) Agricultural 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.\*
  - Owner of applicant organization; Employee of applicant organization; Technical service provider; Business advisor; Grant writer; Family/friend; Other (specify)
- Name\*
- Email address\*
- Phone number\*
- Preferred method of communication\*
- Job title\*
- How did you hear about this funding opportunity?\*

#### Grant Request Information

- Amount of grant funds requested (\$)

**Note:** Refer to the Request for Applications (RFA) for the allowable funding request range.

#### Applicant's Business/Organization Information

Some questions in this section may not apply to the business/organization and are optional.

- Legal name of the organization\*
- Organizational structure (legal structure for tax purposes)
  - 501(c)(3); B Corporation; Cooperative; Corporation; L3C; LLC; Non-profit; Partnership; S Corporation; Sole Proprietorship; Other
- Primary operation type

- Farm, forestry, or other land-based operation; Processing operation; Distribution operation; College/university; Early childhood education program; Governmental entity; Independent business advisor; Independent contractor (other); Manufacturer; Other non-profit; Political/advocacy organization; Private foundation; Producer/trade association; Religious organization; Retail operation; School – private/independent; School – public; Technical assistance provider; Other
- If the business/organization is a farm, forestry or other land-based operation:
  - Estimated number of acres (owned) currently in production
  - Estimated number of leased or rented acres currently in production
  - Estimated number of acres, if any, currently in conservation
  - What is the business/organization's primary product category?
    - Apiary; Cannabis; Dairy; Grains and Legumes; Hay & Forage Crops; Hemp; Livestock/Poultry (including equine, meat, and fiber animals); Logging, Sawmill, & Firewood; Maple; Nursery Crops & Christmas Trees; Produce (Fruit, Vegetables, Mushrooms, Nuts, Flowers, Herbs); Other (specify)
- Street address\*
- Town/City\*
- State
- County\*
- Number of full-time employees, including owner(s)\*
- Number of part-time and seasonal employees
- Estimated number of volunteer hours that benefit the business/organization in a typical year
- Years in operation\*
- Business/organization's website URL, if one exists
- Social media handles the business/organization uses, if any
- Has the business/organization applied for any grants through the Vermont Agency of Agriculture, Food & Markets (VAAFAM) in the past five years?
  - Did you receive any of the grants from VAAFAM that you applied for?
  - Please specify the VAAFAM grant(s) you received.

### **Optional Business/Organization Information**

- What is the business/organization's most recent annual operating budget?
  - Less than \$50,000; \$50,000-\$100,000; \$100,000-\$250,000; \$250,000-\$500,000; \$500,000-\$1,000,000; \$1,000,000-\$3,000,000; \$3,000,000-\$5,000,000; \$5,000,000-\$10,000,000; More than \$10,000,000
- What is the estimated median hourly wage for all employees?
- Which of the following benefits does the business/organization provide to employees and/or volunteers?
  - Dental Insurance; Health Insurance; Health Savings Contribution; Vision Insurance; Paid Vacation; Sick Time; Paid Parental Leave; Childcare

Support; Physical Transportation; Subsidized Transportation; Free Housing; Subsidized Housing; Product Discounts; Product Donations; Retirement Plan; Other

- Does the business/organization employ H-2A farmworkers?
  - If so, how many H-2A farmworkers does the business/organization employ in a typical year?

### **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/q/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.

## **WORKING LANDS ENTERPRISE INITIATIVE APPLICATION QUESTIONS**

### **Project & Business Information**

#### **Project Information**

- Project title that briefly summarizes the project\*
- General sector(s) served by this project (agriculture, forestry)\*
- Primary project product category (Beverages; Apiary; Dairy & Dairy Products; Distribution - Wood Products; Distribution - Agricultural Products; Firewood; Grain & Legume Crops; Hay & Forage Crops; Hemp Products; Livestock & Meat Products; Logging; Maple & Maple Products; Produce; Sawmill; Specialty Foods & Beverages; Wood Manufacturing & Construction; Wood Pellet Production; Other)\*
- Project category (Infrastructure development; Market development; Research and development; Workforce training and development)\*
- Provide a brief overview of your project, including how requested funds will be used. Explain why your project is being proposed and reference key anticipated outcomes.\*
- Describe the core team of individuals who will be involved in the project and their expertise that will contribute to project success. Identify any partners expected to participate in the project and specify their role.\*
- If applicable, what permits will you need for this project? What is your estimated timeline for receiving each permit?

- While having permits in hand isn't required to receive WLEI grants, applicants are encouraged to consider permitting needs at this time to ensure potential permitting costs and timelines are included in the Project Budget and Work Plan, if applicable. Please visit [Act 250 Resources for Working Lands Enterprise Fund Projects](#) for guidance around common permitting questions.

### **Business Overview**

- Review the [definitions for the different stages of business development](#) and select the one that applies most to your business/organization.\*
- Describe the business/organization in terms of activities, products, and markets.\*
- Describe the business/organization's efforts to build business financial viability (such as diverse and/or reliable markets, partnerships, internal management systems, etc.). Summarize any business planning activities done by the owner and/or employees, including whether the business has a current business plan. Describe the business's long-term goals and efforts to promote overall business sustainability.\*
- Value-added food businesses: Describe your ingredient sourcing, including the percent of raw ingredients that come from both within and outside Vermont and the total annual spending those ingredients.
- Secondary wood businesses: Describe the species mix of wood used by the business and identify any changes in the species mix that has occurred in the last five years or may occur in the next five years. Estimate the percent of wood sourced from within and outside Vermont and identify any changes in the wood sourcing that has occurred in the last five years or may occur in the next five years. Estimate total annual spending on wood products sourced from Vermont.
- Food or wood product aggregation or distribution businesses: Describe the types and source of products the business transports. Estimate the percent of products that come from both within and outside Vermont and the total annual spending on those products.
- Retail businesses: Describe the types and source of products the business sells. Estimate the percent of products that come from both within and outside Vermont and the total annual spending on and sales value of those products.

### **Business Financial Statements**

Upload PDF versions of the following documents:

- Most recent balance sheet that demonstrates assets and liabilities compared to prior fiscal or calendar year\*  
(No older than December 2023)
- Profit and loss statement (or income statement) for business prior fiscal or calendar year\*  
(If business fiscal year is the same as calendar year, this should be year-end actuals from 2023.)
- Current year-to-date profit and loss statement\*

With projections through the end of the business' current fiscal or calendar year recommended.

*(If business fiscal year is the same as the calendar year, this should be for Jan 2024-Dec 2024, with actuals and projections where applicable.)*

- Projected monthly cash flow statement for the next business fiscal or calendar year (12 months)\*  
*(If business fiscal year is the same as the calendar year, this should be an estimated cash flow statement from Jan 2025-Dec 2025.)*

To see examples of financial documents for an agricultural business, please view this [sample farm business plan, including financial statements](#) provided by the Intervale Center. If you need fillable templates to create these documents, select the workbook applicable for your farm from the [Intervale Center Farm Financial Tools section](#). Forestry/logging businesses looking for examples of financial documents can use the [UVM Extension Small Business Planning for Loggers tool](#). (Note: you will need to download the file and open in Adobe Acrobat to access the fillable template and business plan samples.)

### **Intended Project Impact**

Applicants are NOT expected to demonstrate impact in all areas listed below. Please respond ONLY to the impact questions below that are relevant to your project.

#### **Projected Impact on Product Output**

- What units of measurement are used by your business for product output (e.g., jars, cases, pounds, board feet)?
- What is the current annual product output of your business (number of units produced)?
- Will this project result in increased product output for your business?
  - If so, by how much is product output anticipated to increase in the fiscal year following project completion (in percentage)?
  - If so, please identify any committed processors and/or buyers for the proposed increase in product. Identify the timeline for securing any additional commitments from buyers/processors, if applicable.

#### **Projected Impact on Sales**

- What were your gross sales in the prior fiscal or calendar year?
- What were your net sales in the prior fiscal or calendar year?
- Will this project result in increased gross sales for your business?
  - If so, by how much are gross annual sales anticipated to increase as a percentage during the fiscal year after project completion?
- Will this project result in increased net sales for your business?
  - If so, by how much are net annual sales anticipated to increase as a percentage during the fiscal year after project completion?
- Does this project involve accessing a new market(s)?

- If so, explain any market research that has been done to date (e.g., exploring market demand, identifying buyers, etc.)

#### **Projected Impact on Employment and/or Labor Efficiency**

- Will this project increase the number of full-time employees and/or weekly employee hours?
  - If so, how many anticipated full-time equivalent (FTE) jobs will be added as a result of this project? (1.0 FTE = 40 hours/week; 0.25 = 10 hours/week, etc.)
- Will this project increase labor efficiency?
  - If so, describe the anticipated time savings. Include the anticipated reduction in labor as hours per week or hours per season.

#### **Projected Impact on Land Management and/or Acreage in Production**

- Will this project result in increased acreage in active production?
  - If so, how many new acres will be impacted?
- Will this project result in improved land management practices?
  - If so, please describe the land management practices that will be adopted/applied.

#### **Projected Impact on Workforce Development and/or Wellbeing**

- If applicable, describe how this project will result in improved workplace safety and/or conditions, such as reducing need for heavy lifting, weatherization to reduce employee exposure to heat or cold, scheduling changes to reduce longer or overnight shifts, etc.
- If applicable, describe any expanded owner and/or employee benefits that may result from this project, such as health coverage, housing, food shares, childcare support, transportation subsidies, etc.
- If applicable, describe how this project will impact workforce development, such as wage increases, providing training opportunities for owner(s) or employees, employee promotions, etc.

#### **Projected Impact on Climate Adaptation**

- If applicable, describe how this project will support adaptation to climate change and/or extreme weather events. This could include land management, production, or other changes that lessen the impact of heavy rains/floods, extreme heat and/or cold, changes in growing season length, etc.

#### **Projected Impact on Equity, Engagement, and Equality**

- If applicable, describe how this project will support people, business owners, and/or communities that are historically underserved and/or marginalized.

Examples of historically underserved and/or marginalized communities are people living below the poverty threshold, people facing food insecurity or

homelessness, immigrants, LGBTQ+ people, people of color, people with disabilities, veterans, and women.

### Goals and Expected Measurable Outcomes

Enter your project goals into each row (800 character limit per box). Enter at least three and not more than five goals. For each goal, enter an indicator of your organization’s performance toward that goal (e.g., number of businesses reached). Finally, create a measurable outcome by adding anticipated numbers to your performance measure (e.g., sell 100 pounds per month by March 2026).

Expected measurable outcomes should be achieved within the 12-month grant period.

For additional reference, view WLEI’s [Goals and Expected Measurable Outcomes](#) page.

Goal	Performance Measure	Expected Measurable Outcome
<i>Example: Increase early tomato production to help satisfy local demand</i>	<i>Example: Pounds of tomatoes harvested and sold in June and July</i>	<i>Example: Increase from 100 lbs to 200 lbs of “early” tomatoes harvested in June and July</i>
<i>Example: Offer 2-week lead time for furniture products.</i>	<i>Example: Average time between customer placing order and product shipping.</i>	<i>Example: Shorten average time between order placement and product shipping from 6 weeks to 2 weeks.</i>

### Project Work Plan

Enter at least three project activities into the Project Work Plan table (800-character limit per box):

- **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 activity timeline, including the activity start date and projected completion date. Project activities must be completed within the 12-month grant period starting in April 2025 and ending in March 2026.



<b>Project Activity</b>	<b>Personnel/Responsible Parties</b>	<b>Estimated Timeline/Completion</b>
<i>Example: Construct addition on storage building.</i>	<i>Example: Contractor</i>	<i>Example: March 2025 – June 2025</i>

**Project Budget  
Budget Template**

For each expense category that applies to your project budget, complete the corresponding row in the table below. Make sure that the total in the grant request column is the same as the grant request amount that you entered in the first section of the application. Your budget should include any other funding sources supporting the proposed project as matching funds, if applicable. Up to 10% of requested grant funds may be used for indirect costs (i.e., facilities/administrative costs).

Costs that happen before the grant is awarded are not eligible. Please round to the nearest whole dollar amount.

<b>Expense Category</b>	<b>Grant Request</b>	<b>Additional Project Costs (if applicable)</b>	<b>Source of Additional Project Costs (if applicable)</b>	<b>Details/Purpose</b>	<b>Total</b>
Salaries/Wages (Personnel)					
Benefits					
Travel					
Supplies					
Contractual					
Other Direct Costs					
Indirect Costs					
<b>TOTAL</b>					

**Budget Narrative** (1000-character limit for each question):

- Provide further detail on proposed amounts for all line items, as needed.



- Will the project cost more than the grant amount you are requesting?\*
- Describe efforts to fund this project with other sources and, if applicable, why those efforts have not been sufficient. Identify any other grants/loans you have received, are currently applying for, or plan to apply for to support this project. If you answered "Yes" to the previous question, explain whether the funds that will cover remaining project costs are already available, or if they are coming from another grant or source that is not yet confirmed. If the source of remaining project costs is not yet confirmed, estimate when it will be confirmed.\*
- Upload a quote or cost estimate for any budget items exceeding \$5,000 (not including salaries/wages and benefits).
- Describe your intended methods of tracking staff time and expenses associated with the grant.\*
- If Working Lands funds are not received, explain how this will impact your project, e.g., adjusted scope, lower probability of success, would not happen, and/or an urgent window of opportunity would be missed.\*
- If you have previously received a Working Lands grant, describe how your proposed project relates to or builds upon your previous Working Lands grant project. Or, state if the project proposed here is unrelated to any past Working Lands funding.\*

### **Additional Attachments**

Space provided to upload up to five documents (must be in PDF format). If you have more than 5 documents to upload, you can combine them into 1-5 PDF documents.

- (Optional) Upload letters of support from community members, customers, suppliers, buyers, or other partners.
- (Optional) Upload additional documentation that further demonstrates the nature of the project, such as project outlines, summary of results from related previous work, photos, website screen shots, additional written information, etc.

### **Signature of Compliance**

Demonstration of applicant compliance with state regulations and good standing with the State of Vermont – e-signature and date

- Completed [Water Quality Compliance Form](#) upload\*

### **Time Spent on Application**

Estimate the total number of hours that went into the submission of this application - including preparation, research, and collection of supporting documentation.\* This information has no impact on application scoring, and it will only be used to understand the time commitment for applicants and to refine the application process in the future.

## **SECTION 4: APPLICATION SCORING CRITERIA**

### **APPLICATION REVIEW**

Working Lands grant funds will be awarded to applicants through a competitive review process. Sector specific groups of Working Lands Enterprise Board (WLEB) members, State agency staff, farmers, foresters, and industry partners will review submitted applications and make funding recommendations to the full WLEB for final awarding decisions. Applicants will be notified by email of application approval or denial, with specific feedback, in late February/early March 2025.

### **APPLICATION SCORING**

An application can be strong without scoring highly in all scoring categories. Criteria that will inform scoring of application quality are as follows:

#### **Business Viability and Financial Management (20 points total)**

- The applicant possesses overall characteristics of a viable business, including strong markets, partnerships, and internal management. Scoring is based on the questions related to the business overview, individual and partners involved in the project, and business planning. General background information about the business may inform scoring as they relate to responses to the specific business viability questions. Optional letters of support or other optional attachments, such as a business plan, can also inform scoring in this area. (5 points)
- Applicant demonstrates strong financial management skills. The profit & loss statement, cash flow statement, and balance sheet are clear, comprehensive, and demonstrate that the business is demonstrating appropriate financial trends for the age and stage of the business. If applicable, the project's projected impact on increased sales and/or increased product output is clear and supported by the financial projections provided. (10 points)
- The applicant demonstrates an evident need for Working Lands Enterprise Initiative funding. Project cannot be fully funded through other sources sought by the applicant. Scoring is based on the financial picture given through submitted financial statements, along with information in the budget section about other funding sources. Optional letters of support can also inform scoring in this area. (5 points)

#### **Project Impact (20 points total)**

- The applicant clearly demonstrates how the project will enhance Vermont's working landscape, with impacts that may include job creation and/or increased production efficiency; increased sales; increased product output; improved land management practices and/or increased (or retained) acres in active forestry or agricultural use; workforce development and/or increased worker or owner wellbeing; climate mitigation initiatives. Scoring is based on the area(s) of

primary impact selected by the applicant in the Intended Project Impact section of the application. Optional letters of support can also inform scoring in this area. (20 points)

- Secondary wood businesses that do NOT source any wood from within Vermont can score a maximum of 16 points for the project impact section.

### **Demonstrated Project Need (15 points total)**

- The proposal demonstrates that there is a credible need for the specified project. Scoring is based on the Project Information section. Optional letters of support can also inform scoring in this area. (15 points)

### **Quality of Concept (15 points total)**

- The proposed activities are a reasonable approach to addressing identified business needs. Scoring is based on the Project Work Plan section and the Project Information section. (5 points)
- The proposed activities in the workplan are clear and can be conducted within the 12-month grant period. The workplan demonstrates that the project would be able to start within 2 months of being awarded. Scoring is based on the Project Work Plan section of the application. If applicable, the question about permitting in the Project Information section also informs scoring for this area. Optional letters of support can also inform scoring in this area. (10 points)

### **Budget (10 points total)**

- The proposed budget table and narrative is clear, realistic, and well-planned. If applicable, quotes for equipment or contractor work are provided to support the proposed budget. Scoring is based on the Budget section of the application. (10 points)

### **Engagement, Equity, and Equality (10 points total)**

- The applicant demonstrates how this project will support people, business owners, and/or communities that are historically underserved and/or marginalized. Scoring is based on answers to the question on this topic in the Intended Project Impact section of the application. If there is information about this topic in the project overview, individuals/partners involved in the project, and/or business overview, it may also be used to inform scoring. Optional letters of support on this topic may also be used to inform scoring. (10 points)

### **Goals and Expected Measurable Outcomes (10 points total)**

- Proposed goals and outcomes are relevant to the project, are explained clearly in the proposal, and are significant according to scale of the business. Scoring is based on the Goals & Expected Measurable Outcomes section. (5 points)
- Proposed goals and outcomes are realistically achievable within the project period of 12 months. Scoring is based on the Goals & Expected Measurable

Outcomes section. Optional letters of support can also inform scoring in this area. (5 points)

## SECTION 5: 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 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 for Contracts and Grants](#) (revised 12/7/2023) at [bgs.vermont.gov/purchasing-contracting/forms](https://bgs.vermont.gov/purchasing-contracting/forms) for the most recent state provisions.

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

1. A current [IRS Form W-9](#) (Request for Taxpayer Identification Number and Certification), signed within the past six months;
2. A certificate of insurance consistent with the requirements set forth in [Attachment C](#) of the grant agreement (not required if grantee already has a current certificate of insurance on file with VAAFAM);
3. Documentation that verifies pledged matching funds, as applicable.

### GRANTEE PAYMENT SCHEDULE

Except for the first payment following grant agreement signing, grant payments are based upon project performance and completion of project activities. Progress will be communicated via status reports, which must be approved by the State grant program manager before claims (payment requests) are approved. All claims will be submitted and approved via [WebGrants](#) at [agriculturegrants.vermont.gov](https://agriculturegrants.vermont.gov).

Working Lands grant funds are typically distributed according to the following schedule, but depending on project needs grantee can work with staff to develop and adjusted payment schedule, which can include receiving additional funds up front:

1. Up to 40% of the grant award following signing of the grant agreement, plus submission and approval of an initial claim;
2. Up to an additional 40% of the grant award (80% total) at the mid-point of the project, following completion and approval of the Interim Report demonstrating project progress, and a second claim;
3. Final 20% (or other remaining amount) of the grant award, following submission and approval of the Final Report demonstrating project completion and satisfactory achievement of expected measurable outcomes, and a final claim.

Grantees must maintain documentation of project costs, both those paid with grant funds and with matching funds, throughout the grant period. Accurate expense totals are a required component of status reporting.

## **REPORTING REQUIREMENTS**

Prior to receipt of the second and third grant payments, respectively, grant recipients must complete an Interim Report and Final Report in [WebGrants](#). Reports will include a narrative of project accomplishments to date, progress toward meeting expected goals and outcomes, a budget table showing amounts of expended grant and matching funds, and high-resolution digital photos in .jpg format that demonstrate project work. Grantees will be expected to collaborate with VAAFAM staff to measure the impact of their project on businesses served.

Grantees must be willing to share project details, including successes and challenges, with the public, the WLEB, and the media, which illustrate how the grant is impacting Vermont's working lands economies. This may occur through media inquiries, press events on location, and/or site visits from VAAFAM staff, WLEB members, and/or program partners.

## APPENDIX

Working Lands Grant agreements are held between the State of Vermont and the business or, where applicable, the business entity. Should the business entity cease to exist, or if the business entity to which this grant is issued becomes inactive, the State may suspend or cancel this Grant immediately, and the State shall be under no obligation to pay or further pay grantee.

Ready to begin work: Grantee must be ready to begin project work immediately following execution of this grant agreement. If grantee anticipates a delay or experiences a delay of more than two months, grantee shall submit to the grant manager via email an explanation for the delay and note the extent to which the delay will/will not impact project completion. Similarly, grantees should submit their initial claim for funds reimbursement within two months of receipt of the grant agreement. An explanation must be sent to the grant administrator if no request for reimbursement is anticipated within the first two months of the grant.

,Publicly known and open to inspection: Except for grantee proprietary and personal identifying data, as noted per 1V.S.A. § 317(c), grantee names, projects, the amount of grant awards, and all other information regarding Working Lands grant projects are considered public information and are open to inspection. Grantee can also anticipate communication from other Working Lands partners and stakeholders regarding project successes and accomplishments.

Grantee Confidential and/or Proprietary Information: Grantee is responsible for noting all information, data, project results and narrative text which it considers confidential and/or proprietary in its reports and communications with the state. Grantee financials are automatically classified as confidential by the state.

Working Lands Enterprise Initiative, as a public instrumentality, is subject to the Vermont Public Records Law, 1 VSA § 315-320. The statute contains specific exemptions for tax-related information of persons, financial information of an individual or business, and trade secrets. This information will be held in confidential files by the Working Lands Enterprise Board and will not be available for public inspection under the Public Records Law.

The Working Lands Enterprise Board and the state of Vermont consider the following information about applicants to be subject to public record: contact information of applicants; names, description, and contact information of applying enterprise or organization; the purpose and amount of any Working Lands Enterprise Funds received; and grantee communications. Other information may be shared in aggregate form (without identifying individual business info).

The Working Lands Enterprise Board is a public body, and all meetings are open to the public as required by 1 V.S.A. § 310-314. Grant applications are discussed during executive session to protect applicant's proprietary information, including financial information and trade secrets.

Acknowledgement: All meetings and gatherings held because of this grant will recognize the Vermont Agency of Agriculture, Food and Markets and the Working Lands Enterprise Board as a funder. Written and electronic materials produced shall include text acknowledging the same and shall also feature a Vermont Agency of Agriculture, Food and Markets graphic. Grantee may be required to reprint event flyers, posters, and/or brochures or repost meeting announcements if the State learns of grantee's failure to acknowledge the Working Lands Enterprise Board as a funder.

Tax Implications: WLEB recommends that all entities consult with a tax accountant as needed regarding how to report grant awards for tax purposes, including advising on tax returns. State of Vermont staff and Working Lands partners are not authorized to advise or provide input on tax-related information, including the completion of federal forms.