



WORKING LANDS ENTERPRISE INITIATIVE

Applying for a Working Lands Enterprise Fund Grant: ARPA Primary Producer Impact Grant Supply Chain Impact Grant Fiscal Year 2024

Working Lands Enterprise Initiative
WorkingLands.vermont.gov

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Welcome!



We will provide a brief overview of the Working Lands Enterprise Initiative before discussion.



Please mute when not speaking.



Use the raise hand function to ask a question or share your ideas.



Or, type your question or comment in the chat.



Thank you for joining us today!



What is the Working Lands Enterprise Initiative?

The mission of the Vermont Working Lands Enterprise Initiative is to strengthen and grow the economies, cultures, and communities of Vermont's working landscape. The Working Lands Enterprise Board achieves this by making essential, catalytic investments in critical leverage points of the Vermont farm and forest economy, and facilitating policy development to optimize the agricultural and forest use of Vermont lands.

- Created in 2012
- Manages and invests roughly \$1 million annually into agricultural and forestry-based businesses
- Awarded to date = \$16 million
- Fiscal Year 2024 = \$3 million available



Who is Involved?

- Farm, food and forest businesses in Vermont
- State Agencies:
 - Agriculture, Food & Markets
 - Commerce and Community Development
 - Department of Forest Parks and Recreation
- Business assistance organizations:
 - Vermont Agricultural Assistance Corp
 - Vermont Sustainable Jobs Fund
 - Vermont Housing and Conservation Board

Working Lands grants and contracts applications are reviewed and awarded through a competitive review process guided by industry, nonprofit, and government stakeholders.



Fiscal Year 2024 Grant Opportunities

- Service Provider Grant – September/October
- Producer Association Grant – September/October
- Business Enhancement Grant - October/November
- Supply Chain and ARPA Primary Producer Impact Grants – December 2023/January 2024
- Trade Show Assistance Grant – December 2023 /January 2024
- Small Farm Diversification Grant – January/February/March 2024





Timeline: Both grants

- **December 8, 2023:** Request for Applications (RFA) released and pre-application opened in WebGrants
- **December 13, 2023:** Applicant webinar with Q&A
- **January 19, 2024 at 11:59 pm:** Application closes
- **Mid-February 2024:** Applicants notified of pre-application decisions/final applicant opens for those invited
- **March 25, 2024:** Final application due
- **Early May 2024:** Final round applicants notified of award decisions
- **May 2024:** Grantee documentation due
- **June 2024:** Estimated project start
- **June 2026:** Estimated project completion



General Eligibility: Both grants

- Organizations must be based in Vermont
- All organizational structures are eligible: Partnerships, Limited Liability Corporations, Sole Proprietorships, Cooperatives, etc., and/or non-profits
- Organization must be in compliance with all state regulations and in good standing with the State of Vermont
- Previous Working Lands Business Enhancement Grant and COVID-19 Response Business Development Grant recipients may re-apply this year
- Previous recipients of a Working Lands ARPA Primary Producer Impact Grant, Supply Chain Impact or Market Level Infrastructure Grant, or Meat Slaughter and Processing Development Grant are eligible to re-apply after three years (Fiscal Year 2021 and earlier grantees are eligible this year)



Eligibility: ARPA Primary Producer Impact Grant

- Operational prior to January 2020
- **Must be a primary producer of farm or forest products**, e.g., growing crops, livestock rearing, maple sugaring, dairy, harvesting timber
 - Due to federal guidelines, eligible forestry businesses must be involved in harvesting timber
- **Must demonstrate negative economic impact due to the COVID-19 pandemic**, e.g., increased operational costs, decreased revenue or gross receipts, challenges covering payroll, etc. Grant funds must be used to support recovery from economic harm experienced.
- Vermont COVID-19 Agriculture Assistance Program (VCAAP) recipients must apply for a different scope of work



Eligibility: Supply Chain Impact Grant

- Any primary producer of agriculture/forest products (farm, sugarmaker, logger)
- Value-added food 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 are eligible.
 - Businesses that sell “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 processed foods made from ingredients that are not regularly produced in Vermont or are not available in sufficient quantities to meet production requirements.
- Secondary forestry businesses are eligible if at least 50% of the wood they use is grown in the Northeast OR the Working Lands grant project will significantly increase use of wood sourced from the Northeast.



Project types: Both grants

- **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 new branding/marketing strategy
- **Research and development** – testing new systems or technology
- **Infrastructure development** – project-specific planning/permitting; building and equipment costs, including for labor and/or energy efficiency enhancements
- **Workforce training and development** – technical skill training for staff, business management training, and/or business succession planning



Project types: Supply Chain Impact Grant

Projects must have a supply chain and/or market level impact on its respective sector, such as:

- Make significant process and/or infrastructure improvements for medium to large scale production, producer-processing initiatives, or distribution of primary products in the forestry and/or agriculture sectors.
- Scale of the primary product being brought into supply chain has ability to strengthen the industry, address the sector on a market-wide scale, and/or address a market downturn.
- The technology or approach is innovative and will lead to new opportunities for multiple businesses and/or will increase the scale of the enterprise in a way that enables it to meet a growing market demand.





Grant Amount & Matching Funds: Both grants

- Grant requests can be anywhere from \$50,000-\$250,000
- Matching funds (shared costs) – 100% of grant request (one-to-one ratio)
 - Cash sources: funds in the bank, other grants, loans, applicant labor toward project
 - In-kind sources: donated supplies/services, volunteer labor
- Match waiver or reduction request:
 - In budget table, enter amount of match you can realistically commit to (if full waiver requested, enter \$0)
 - Explain why match waiver is needed at this time
- Changes can be made to the grant request and/or matching amount during the final application based on demonstrated price changes in quotes/cost estimates. Other changes to grant request not allowed.
- Up to \$786,200 is available to award for the Supply Chain Impact Grant.
- Up to \$912,991 is available to award for the ARPA Primary Producer Impact Grant.



Request for Pre-Applications: Both Grants

- Go-to grant information document (linked on grant webpage) that contains:
 - Key dates
 - Program information
 - Applicant eligibility
 - Project eligibility
 - Application in full
 - Grant reporting requirements
 - Review info/scoring criteria and weight



Pre-application Sections

- Business/Organization Information
- Project overview
- Project budget with narrative (and quotes/cost estimates if applicable)
- Optional letters of support or additional attachments



Documents Required in Pre-application: Both Grants

- Quotes or cost estimates for any purchases greater than \$5,000
- Optional Documents:
 - Letters of support to justify the current need for and importance of the project – *recommended*
 - Additional documentation to demonstrate project planning work completed to date (project plan, contractor estimates, blueprints, etc.) – *optional*

Any of these documents can be updated during the final application.



Documents Required in Pre-application: ARPA Primary Producer Grant

- 2021 Schedule F OR 2021 profit and loss statement to demonstrate primary producer status
- 2019 tax return to demonstrate business operations before January 2020
- Narrative description of negative impact of COVID on your business



Pre-Application Scoring Criteria

- Supply Chain Impact Grant
 - Quality of Concept: 25 points
 - Budget: 25 points
 - Supply Chain Impact: 20 points
 - Demonstrated Project Need: 20 points
 - Business Viability: 10 points
- ARPA Primary Producer Impact Grant
 - Quality of Concept: 30 points
 - Budget: 30 points
 - Demonstrated Project Need: 30 points
 - Business Viability: 10 points



Documents Required in Final Round Applications: Both Grants

State of Vermont:

- Act 154 Water Quality Compliance Form

Business Financial Statements:

- Past fiscal year balance sheet
- Past fiscal year profit and loss statement
- Current year-to-date profit and loss statement
- Projected monthly cash flow statement for the next fiscal year
- Business Plan (for projects >\$75,000)

Optional Documents:

- Letters of support to justify the current need for and importance of the project – *recommended*
- Additional documentation to demonstrate project planning work completed to date (project plan, contractor estimates, blueprints, etc.) – *optional*




Documents Required for Awarding

- Current W-9 form

- Certificate of Insurance
 - State of Vermont named as additional insured
 - See Attachment C: Standard State Provisions for Contracts and Grants for coverage requirements

- E-signed and fully executed grant agreement prior to beginning project work or incurring expenses

 Login

 Enter your user id and password

User ID

Password

SIGN IN

[Forgot User ID?](#)

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[Click here to Register](#)

 **Announcements**

Welcome to the WebGrants New User Interface (NUI). If you already have a WebGrants account, log in with the same User ID and password as before.

New Users: Register to create an account using the yellow registration button to the left. If you believe you have registered before, **do not** create a duplicate account.

Registrations are manually approved and are not processed during evenings or weekends. **Please anticipate up to 1-2 business days for your registration to be approved.** Once approved, you will have access to the system.

Contact Melissa Moon (melissa.moon@vermont.gov), Rebecca Brockett (rebecca.brockett@vermont.gov) or Diana Ferguson (diana.ferguson@vermont.gov) if you encounter any issues.



Working Lands Enterprise Initiative: Applicant Resources

- Working Lands funding opportunity [Frequently Asked Questions](#)
- [Agency of Agriculture, Food & Markets \(VAAFMM\) weekly newsletter](#)
- [VAAFMM Funding Opportunities Calendar](#)
- [Business planning resources](#)
- [Working Lands Business Development Directory](#): to help farm, food, forest, and wood products business owners find service providers for their unique needs

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Tips for Assembling a Successful Application

- Start early – compile documents, finalize project info, update business plan, contact partners re: letters of support and/or commitment
- Set up your stakeholder meeting (advisor(s), identify project lead, lenders, etc.)
- Register in WebGrants ASAP (each person separately)
- Read the full Request for Applications (posted on website)
- Before beginning an application, read the WebGrants Application Guide
- Consider drafting responses in a separate document, then entering in WebGrants
- Set up a 1:1 call with program staff.

When in doubt, reach out!

- **WLEI program info and project eligibility:**
Clare Salerno – Clare.Salerno@vermont.gov
- **WebGrants and grant administration:**
Diana Ferguson – Diana.Ferguson@vermont.gov



Picture Courtesy
Small Axe Farm

Questions?