



VERMONT AGENCY OF AGRICULTURE, FOOD & MARKETS WORKING LANDS ENTERPRISE INITIATIVE BUSINESS ENHANCEMENT GRANT

FISCAL YEAR 2024 REQUEST FOR APPLICATIONS (RFA)

KEY DATES

Publication Date: October 6, 2023

Application Opens: October 6, 2023

Optional Grant Applicant Webinar: October 11, 2023 12:00–1:00 PM

[Register for the webinar.](#)

Deadline to Request Optional Assistance with Grant Project Planning: October 30, 2023 at 12:00 PM/noon. Contact Clare Salerno at Clare.Salerno@vermont.gov to be referred to a business advisor from the Vermont Farm & Forest Viability Program.

Application Closes: November 20, 2023 at 8:00 PM

Award Notification: January 2024

Estimated Project Start: February 2024

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CONTACT INFORMATION

PROGRAM QUESTIONS

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WEBGRANTS TECHNICAL ASSISTANCE

Diana Ferguson

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802-622-4094

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 grants management system, WebGrants, at agriculturegrants.vermont.gov.

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 allow application submission 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

Approximately 20% of Vermont’s working landscape is used for agricultural purposes, and 80% is forested. Vermont prospers and its unique sense of place thrives because of intelligent investments in the people and enterprises that comprise its farm, food, and forest-based systems. Strong community engagement and support for the farm and forest sectors leads to enhanced quality of life for Vermont citizens and working lands business owners.

[Vermont Act 142](#) of 2011, An act relating to preserving Vermont’s working landscape, created the Working Lands Enterprise Fund (WLEF) and the Working Lands Enterprise Board (WLEB). The WLEB is made up of:

- Private sector members throughout the agriculture and forest supply chains
- Vermont Agency of Agriculture, Food, and Markets staff
- Vermont Department of Forests, Parks & Recreation staff
- Vermont Agency of Commerce and Community Development staff
- Vermont Housing & Conservation Board staff
- Vermont Economic Development Authority staff
- Vermont Sustainable Jobs Fund staff

HISTORY OF SUCCESS TO DATE

Since its formation in August 2012, the Working Lands Enterprise Board (WLEB) has awarded over \$15 million in grant funds to over 400 grantees, leveraging more than \$26 million in matching funds. For lists of previous awards, visit the [Funded Projects](#) page.

ELIGIBLE APPLICANTS

Businesses must be based in Vermont and registered with the [Vermont Secretary of State](#) at the time of application. All structures are eligible (e.g., Partnerships, Limited Liability Corporations, Sole Proprietorships, Cooperatives, Corporations, S Corporations, L3Cs, B Corporations, and/or non-profits that are involved in the support of production of agriculture and/or forest products). 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.

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. This means that 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 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. Please make your sourcing clear within the application.

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. Please make your sourcing clear within the application.

Previous Working Lands Business Enhancement Grant and COVID-19 Response Business Development Grant recipients are eligible to re-apply for funding during Fiscal Year 2024. 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 apply for further Working Lands funding after three years, meaning that Fiscal Year 2021 and earlier grantees are eligible to apply this year.

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

ELIGIBLE PROJECTS

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

- **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
- **Infrastructure development** – project-specific planning, permitting, engineering or architectural plans; building and equipment costs, including for labor and/or energy efficiency enhancements, such as lighting, refrigeration/cooling, heat pumps, solar panels, low-energy water management, ventilation systems, and/or energy generation; may include equipment installation and/or technical assistance costs
- **Workforce training and development** – technical skill training for staff, business management training, and/or business succession planning, including hiring a consultant to support any of these processes

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

RELATED FISCAL YEAR 2024 (FY24) FUNDING OPPORTUNITIES

FY24 Working Lands Enterprise Initiative Grant Opportunities

To learn more about and decide which of the Fiscal Year 2024 WLEI funding opportunities is most appropriate for your business or organization, please visit the [funding opportunities overview and calendar](#). A business or organization can only apply to one WLEI grant opportunity this year.

FY24 Agriculture Development Grants (ADG) for Meat, Produce & Maple

In Fiscal Year 2024 (July 1, 2023–June 30, 2024), the Agriculture Development Grant program will award up to \$2,300,000 in funds to meat, produce, and maple producers and processors.

We recommend meat, produce, and maple producers and processors consider applying for Agriculture Development Grants (ADG) offered by in Fall and Winter 2023/24. Businesses may accept either a Working Lands or ADG award, but not both, during Fiscal Year 2024.

The Maple ADG opportunity will offer grants of \$15,000 – \$100,000 to maple producers and processors with no match requirement. Funding priorities include climate resilience, operational efficiency, and food safety/quality; all projects should address at least one of these areas. This is a one-time grant opportunity with up to \$544,000 in available funds.

The **Maple ADG Request for Applications** (RFA) will be published on **October 10, 2023**. We anticipate award decisions to be made by December 18, 2023. For more information about the Maple ADG grant, please contact Madison Berry at Madison.Berry@vermont.gov or 802-622-4626.

The Meat and Produce ADG opportunity is under development with ongoing stakeholder feedback this fall. This funding opportunity is open to producers, processors and businesses in either the meat or produce industries. Hydroponic operations are ineligible. The funding range will likely begin at \$50,000 with an upper limit to be determined; it will likely be no more than \$300,000. There will be no match requirement. Funding priorities will be determined by the end of November 2023 and may include climate resilience, operational efficiency, and food safety/quality. This is a one-time grant opportunity with \$1,600,000 in available total funds for meat and produce industry grants.

The **Meat and Produce ADG Request for Applications** (RFA) will be published on **January 5, 2024**. We anticipate award decisions to be made by the first week of April 2024. For more information about the Meat and Produce ADG grant, please contact Sarah McIlvennie at Sarah.Mcilvenine@vermont.gov or 802-261-5866.

Water Quality Projects

In efforts to reduce duplicative programming within VAAF, the WLEB will not fund water quality or soil health equipment and infrastructure projects that are eligible for funding under existing programs of the Vermont Agency of Agriculture, Food and Markets. For example, the Best Management Practices program funds manure

management structures such as manure pits and bedded packs, the Pasture and Surface Water Funding program funds fencing, water systems and laneways for rotational grazing, and the Capital Equipment Assistance Program funds innovative conservation equipment such as manure injection toolbars, grain drills, and no-till planters. For more information on Water Quality grants and eligibility, please see [Water Quality Assistance Programs](#) or contact Sonia Howlett at Sonia.Howlett@vermont.gov.

AVAILABLE FUNDS & SOURCE

Up to \$580,000 from a Fiscal Year 2024 State of Vermont legislative appropriation

MINIMUM & MAXIMUM AWARD

\$15,000–\$50,000 per award

MATCHING REQUIREMENT

Grant recipients must provide matching funds equal to 100% of the grant award (one-to-one) using **cash** (e.g., funds in the bank, paid staff labor hours toward the project) or **in-kind** items (e.g., donated goods, pro bono services, volunteer labor) that the grantee organization has received from other sources.

Match sources must be identified by the time of application submission and commitments in place by the time of grant agreement signing. Matching funds may not be sourced from other State of Vermont funding opportunities. Under limited circumstances, the matching requirement may be reduced or waived for applicants who demonstrate a clear need for this accommodation.

PROJECT LENGTH

12 months

SECTION 2: APPLICATION PROCESS & CONTENT

HOW TO APPLY

Applications must be submitted via the online grants management system, [WebGrants](#), at [agriculturegrants.vermont.gov](#) between Friday, October 6, 2023 and **Monday, November 20, 2023 at 8:00 PM**. 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](#) at [agriculture.vermont.gov/grants/howtoapply](#).

STANDARD APPLICATION QUESTIONS

Questions in the following four sections are asked of everyone who applies for a grant offered by VAAFM's Agriculture Development Division. Some questions in these sections are optional and may not apply to all applicants. 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*
- Name*
- Email address*
- Phone number*
- Preferred method of communication*
- Job title*
- How did you hear about this funding opportunity?*

Applicant's Business/Organization Information

Some questions in this section are optional and may not apply to all applicants.

- 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 five years?*

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?
- Which of the following benefits does your organization provide to its employees and/or volunteers?
- Does the organization hire H-2A farmworkers?

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/g/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 Information

- Project title that briefly summarizes proposal (150-character limit)
- General sector(s) of business (agriculture, forestry, both)
- Primary product category (dropdown menu)
- Secondary product category (dropdown menu)
- Project category (dropdown menu)
- Amount of Working Lands grant funds requested (\$)
- Amount of matching funds committed (\$)
***Please note:** must be equal to or greater than the amount of grant funds requested, through either cash or a combination of cash and in-kind sources. If unable to meet the 1-to-1 match requirement, enter your match commitment amount here and complete the Match Waiver question in the Budget section of this application.

- Attestation of working lands sourcing
 - 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. This means that 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 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.
 - 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 Summary** (2000-character limit): Provide a brief overview of your project, including how requested and matching 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.
- List additional grants received for this project (not for your business as a whole) in the past five years, if any.

Business Information

- **Business Description** (3000-character limit): Describe your business in terms of activities and products. Describe your efforts to build financial viability (such as diverse and/or reliable markets, partnerships, internal management systems, etc.) and promote overall business sustainability beyond the grant period.
- **Stage of Business Development:** Review the [definitions for the different stages of business development](#) and select the one that applies most to your business.
- **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 2022*)
 - Profit and loss statement (of 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 2022.)

- 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 2023-Dec 2023, 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 2024-Dec 2024.)

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. Select one to three areas where this project will have the greatest impact from the dropdown menu. 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)?

- **Projected Impact on Sales**

- What were your gross 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?
- 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**
 - How many full-time equivalent (FTE) positions are currently employed by your business?
 - 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**
 - For farm and maple businesses, what is the current total acreage in production?
 - For primary forestry businesses, how many acres did you log in the last calendar year?
 - 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 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 Mitigation and/or Adaptation**
 - If applicable, describe how this project will reduce greenhouse gas emissions and/or other forms of environmental pollution. This could be through renewable or green energy (wood fuel, solar, wind, electric vehicles, etc.), land management strategies that store/sequester carbon, reduction in transportation, etc.
 - 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 reach or impact historically underserved and/or marginalized communities. Examples of historically underserved and/or marginalized communities are people living below the poverty threshold and/or 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 the appropriate field. Enter at least three and no more than five goals. For each goal, enter an indicator of your organization’s performance toward that goal (e.g., number of units sold per month). Finally, create a measurable outcome by adding anticipated numbers to your performance measure (e.g., sell 100 pounds per month by February 2025).

Expected measurable outcomes must be discrete and attainable within the 12-month grant period. Your goals, indicators, and outcomes should reflect your project's priority impact areas from the Intended Project Impact section of this application.

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 five project activities into the Project Work Plan table (1000-character limit per field):

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

Project Activity	Personnel/Responsible Parties	Estimated Timeline/Completion
<i>Example: Construct addition on storage building.</i>	<i>Example: Contractor</i>	<i>Example: March 2024 – June 2024</i>

Budget Template: Enter the dollar amount for each line item of your budget into the appropriate field. Your budget should include any other funding sources supporting the proposed project as matching funds. Up to 10% of requested grant funds may be used for indirect costs (i.e., facilities/administrative costs).

Example Budget Calculations:

- \$20,000 Working Lands grant request x 10% = \$2,000 eligible as indirect costs
- \$20,000 grant request x 100% = \$20,000 minimum cash and/or in-kind match
- \$20,000 request + \$20,000 match amount = \$40,000 total project cost

Identify the source(s) for all matching funds with a timeline for securing these commitments:

- Examples of **cash match** include funds in the bank, third party funds, and applicant labor directly associated with the proposed project
- Examples of **in-kind match** include goods or services provided during the grant period for which no expenditure is made (e.g., contractors, consultants, or equipment provided pro bono, volunteer labor)

Expense Category	Grant Request (\$)	Matching (\$)		Match Source	Details/Purpose	Total
		Cash	In-Kind			
Salaries/Wages (Personnel)						
Benefits						

Travel						
Supplies						
Contractual						
Other Direct Costs						
Indirect Costs						
TOTAL						

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

- Describe your intended use of Working Lands funds. Provide further detail on proposed amounts for all line items, as needed. Costs incurred prior to the signing of the grant agreement are not eligible.
- Match: Indicate whether all matching funds are committed (at the time of application submission). If not, provide your timeline for securing such commitments prior to grant agreement signing.
- Match Waiver: If a match waiver is requested, provide justification here.
- 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., scope adjusted, lower probability of success, would not happen, and/or an urgent window of opportunity would be missed.
- Describe efforts to fund this project with other sources. Identify other grants/loans you are currently applying for or plan to apply for in conjunction with this one, if any.

Additional Attachments – space provided to upload up to five documents (must be in PDF format)

- Letter(s) of support are optional to justify the current need for and importance of this project. Support letters identify an external entity’s relationship with your business and explain how grant funding will help address a need and/or benefit your community.
- If applicable, include cost estimates for contractor or equipment fees, a business marketing plan, project rendering/plans, or similar documents. Resources like this will offer a clearer picture of the proposed project and demonstrate your readiness to receive grant funds.

Signature of Compliance

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

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

SECTION 3: APPLICATION REVIEW & SCORING

APPLICATION REVIEW

Working Lands grant funds will be awarded to applicants through a competitive review process. A committee of Working Lands Enterprise Board (WLEB) members, State agency staff, and industry stakeholders 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 January 2024.

APPLICATION SCORING

Priority will be given to applicants that are not currently implementing WLEF-funded projects or scopes of work at the time of application submission. An application can be strong without scoring highly in all scoring categories. Criteria that will inform scoring of application quality are as follows:

Project Impact: The applicant clearly demonstrates how the project will enhance Vermont's working landscape, with impacts that may include job creation, retention, 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 adaptation and/or 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. (20 points)

Business Viability and Financial Management: The applicant possesses characteristics of a viable business, including a solid financial management system, diverse markets, partnerships, and strong internal management. (20 points)

- Applicant's 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.
- The applicant demonstrates an evident need for Working Lands Enterprise Initiative funding. Project cannot be fully funded through other sources sought by the applicant.
- The applicant possesses strong markets, partnerships, and internal management.

Quality of Concept: The proposed activities in the workplan are clear and can be conducted within the 12-month grant period. The proposed activities are a reasonable approach to addressing identified business needs. (15 points)

Demonstrated Project Need: The proposal demonstrates that there is a credible need for the specified project. (15 points)

Goals and Expected Measurable Outcomes: Proposed goals and outcomes are relevant to the project, are explained clearly in the proposal, are significant according to scale of the business, and are realistically achievable within the project period of 12 months. (10 points)

Budget: The proposed budget is clear and reflects realistic, well-planned components, including required matching funds. Budget narrative supports and further details items in budget table. If applicable, quotes for equipment or contractor work are provided to support the proposed budget. (10 points)

Engagement, Equity, and Equality: The applicant demonstrates how this project will reach or impact one or more historically underserved and/or marginalized communities. (10 points)

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 (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 12/15/2017) at bgs.vermont.gov/purchasing-contracting/forms for the most recent State provisions.

Prior to commencement of work and release of grant payment, 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.

Working Lands grant funds are typically distributed according to the following schedule:

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.

Grantees must be willing to share project details, including successes and challenges, with the public, the WLEB, and the media, which illustrate the impact of the grant within 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 their stakeholder partners.

APPENDIX A: PROGRAM PROVISIONS

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).

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: We recommend that all entities consult with a tax accountant as needed regarding how to report grant awards for tax purposes, including advising on your tax return. 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.