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WORKING LANDS ENTERPRISE INITIATIVE

Applying for a Working Lands Enterprise Fund Grant: Fiscal Year 2023 APRA-Funded Primary Producer Grant

Working Lands Enterprise Initiative
workinglands.vermont.gov

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Picture Courtesy of Adam's Berry Farm

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!

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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 = $12 million
- Fiscal Year 2023 = $1.6 million available for grants

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Picture Courtesy
Naga Bakehouse

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 grant applications and contract proposals are reviewed and awarded through a competitive review process guided by industry, nonprofit, and government stakeholders.

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Picture Courtesy
Hackett's Orchard

Annual WLEI Grant Cycle

- **July**: State of Vermont Legislature and the Governor pass state budget and approve appropriation to the Working Land Enterprise Fund (WLEF) for upcoming fiscal year.
- **June-August**: WLEB convenes annual symposium to strategize funding prioritization.
- **August-September**: Agency staff conduct outreach and webinars to provide guidance on the upcoming application process.
- **August-November**: Grant Requests for Applications (RFAs) and contract Requests for Proposals (RFPs) open and are typically posted 3-5 weeks prior to application deadline. Subject matter experts and thought partners carefully review each completed application and provide a slate of recommendations to the WLEB.
- **November-April**: WLEB makes final award decisions. Applicants notified by email in the order that RFAs were released and closed. Unsuccessful applicants receive feedback from the WLEB on their applications.
- **December-May**: Agency staff work with awardees to finalize grant agreement or contract criteria for awarded projects.

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Picture Courtesy
Haystack Farmstead

Fiscal Year 2023 Funding Opportunities

Grants

- Service Provider Grant – opened August/closed September 23
- Producer Association Grant – opened August/closed September 23
- Business Enhancement Grant (formerly known as Standard Business Grant) - opened September 23/closed October 28
- ARPA Primary Producer Impact Grant – pre-application opens November 9th/closes December 16th
- Trade Show Assistance Grant – Winter 2023

Contracts

- Not offered this year for new candidates

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Pictures Courtesy UVM Extension and Food Connects

APRA-Funded Primary Producer Grant Timeline

- **October 28, 2022:** Request for Applications (RFA) released
- **November 3, 2022**: Applicant webinar with Q&A, 12-1pm
- **November 9, 2022**: Pre-application opens for submission
- **December 16, 2022**: Pre-application deadline
- **Early February 2023**: Pre-applicants notified of decisions; selected applicants can edit and submit final application
- **Early April 2023**: Final application deadline
- **Early May 2023:** Final round applicants notified of decisions
- **May 2023:** Grantee documentation due
- **June 2023**: Estimated project start

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Working Lands Enterprise Initiative: General Eligibility

- All enterprises must be based in VT and registered with the Secretary of State
- All structures are eligible: Partnerships, LLCs, Sole Proprietorships, Cooperatives, etc., and/or non-profits involved in or supporting production of agriculture and/or forest products
- Applicants must be in compliance with all state regulations (i.e. water quality, taxes) and in good standing with the State of Vermont
- Previous recipients of Working Lands grants are eligible to reapply this year, <u>except</u> FY21 or FY22 Working Lands Supply Chain Impact, Market Level Infrastructure Impact, and Meat Slaughter and Processing Development Grants (FY20 and earlier may apply)
- Past WLEI grant recipients must report on success of previous project and demonstrate how continued funding will build upon earlier work

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Picture Vermont
Salumi/AR Market

APRA-Funded Primary Producer Grant

$50,000-250,000

Eligible Businesses

- 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

APRA-Funded Primary Producer Grant

$50,000-250,000

Eligible Projects

- Market development – hiring a professional marketing/branding contractor to develop strategy and/or content; implementing strategies and/or content developed by 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
- Energy focused projects – efficiency enhancements, 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 consultant costs

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AGRICULTURE, FOOD & MARKETS

Working Lands Enterprise Initiative ARPA-Funded Primary Producer Grant Application Guide

FISCAL YEAR 2023 REQUEST FOR APPLICATIONS

KEY DATES

Request for Applications Release Date: October 28, 2022

Applicant Webinar with Q&A: November 3, 2022 at 12:00-1:00 PM

Pre-Application Opens for Submission: November 9, 2022 at 12:00 PM (noon)

Pre-Application Deadline: December 16, 2022 at 11:59 PM

Notification of Pre-Application Acceptance/Denial: Early February 2023

Full Application Deadline: March 17, 2023

Estimated Project Start: May 2023

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CONTACT

PROGRAMMATIC QUESTIONS

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WEBGRANTS TECHNICAL ASSISTANCE

Diana Ferguson
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(802) 622-4094

Agency of Agriculture, Food and Markets staff are available 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 are accepted through the WebGrants grants management system.

REGISTRATION

New users must complete the WebGrants Registration Form to start an application. New registrations are typically processed within two business days. Please register for an account well in advance of the application deadline.

SUBMISSION POLICY

It is the applicant's responsibility to follow all application instructions including the submission dates and times included in this request for applications (RFA). The Vermont Agency of Agriculture, Food & Markets (VAAFM) will accept the last validated submission through the grants management system, WebGrants, prior to the posted deadline as the final and sole acceptable submission of an application.

We cannot accept submission or re-submission of incomplete or delayed applications after the posted deadline, barring exceptional circumstances.

WebGrants will prevent applications from being submitted after the posted deadline.

SUBMISSION CONFIRMATION

When you have successfully applied, you will be redirected to an **Application Submitted Confirmation** page with an Application ID number. You will also receive a confirmation email.

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WLEF Grants: Request for Applications (RFA)

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Primary RFA Components

- Key dates
- Program information
- Applicant eligibility
- Project eligibility
- Pre-application questions/content
- Grant reporting requirements
- Review info/scoring criteria and weighting

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Picture Courtesy
Fairmont Farm

Matching Funds

- Matching funds (shared costs) – minimum 100% of grant request (one-to-one ratio)
  - Cash sources: funds in the bank, non-Federal grants, loans, applicant labor toward project
  - In-kind sources: donated supplies/services, volunteer labor
- ARPA funds are Federal funds: other Federal funds cannot be used as a match, but State funds can
- 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

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Picture Courtesy
Southwind Forestry

Scoring Criteria

- Quality of Proposal and Management Team: 20 points
- Business Viability: 15 points
- Outcomes/Impact: 20 points
- Supply Chain/Market Level Impact: 5 points
- Collaboration: 10 points
- Budget: 15 points
- Financial Need: 10 points
- Innovation: 5 points

Photo courtesy
Morey Hill Farm

Documents Required in Pre-Application

All Grants:

§ Act 154 Water Quality Compliance Form

All ARPA-Funded Primary Producer Pre-Applications:

- Cover page of 2019 tax return
- One of the following:
  - Profit and loss statement from 2021 showing revenue from primary production activity
  - Filed 2021 Schedule F Profit or Loss from Farming tax return form

  If available, one of the following:
  - State issued registration or license, e.g., Farm registration; Produce program registration; Water quality designations
  - Registration with the Secretary of State that shows NAICS Code 11

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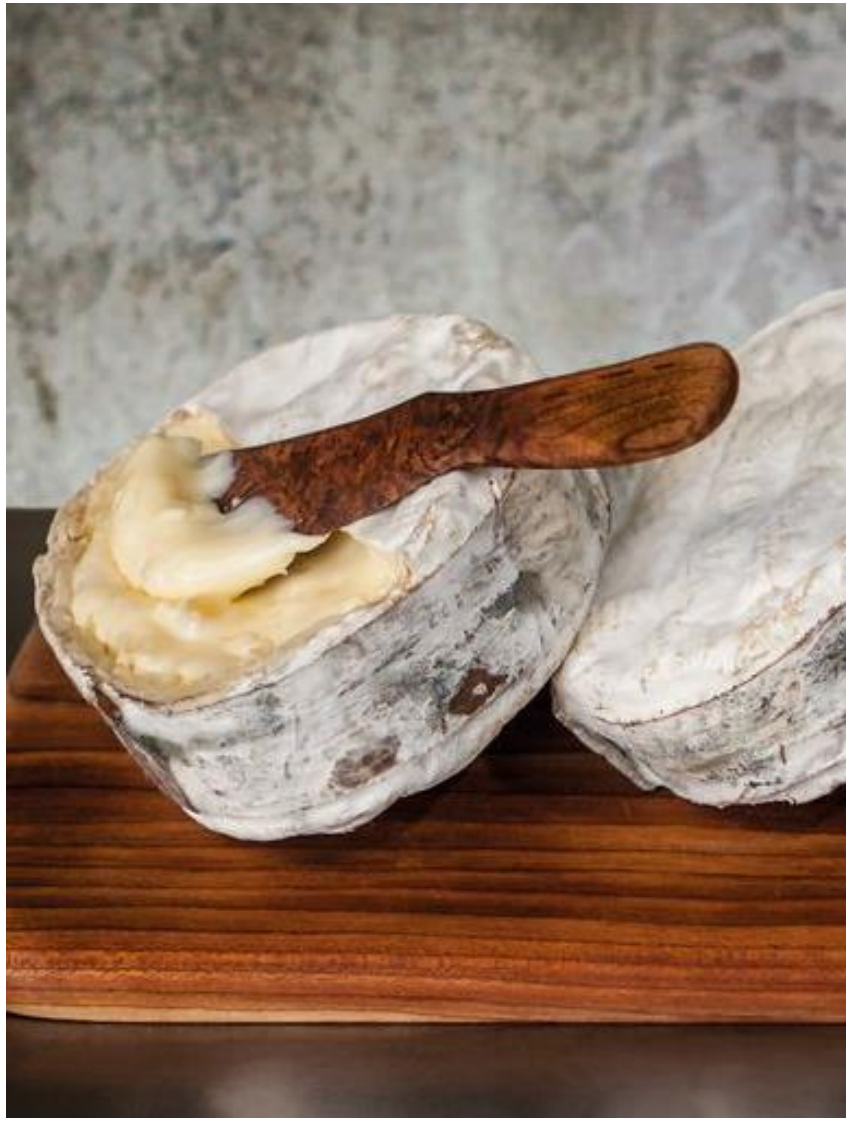
Artesano Meadery



Documents Required in Full Application

- Financial documentation:
  - Cash flow record
  - Profit and loss statement
  - Balance sheet
  - Projected income and expenses
- Business Plan
- Letter(s) of support/commitment demonstrating need for the work or a key partner's commitment to collaboration
- Applicants requesting $150,000 and above will be asked to present a virtual 5-minute project pitch to the reviewer team (optional for requests between $50k - $150k)

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Photo courtesy
Cellars at Jasper Hill

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/incurring expenses

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WebGrants: https://agriculturegrants.vermont.gov

Login

Enter your user id and password

User ID

Password

SIGN IN

Forgot User ID? Forgot Password?

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 Frequently Asked Questions: https://workinglands.vermont.gov/grant-contract-opportunities/faq

Agency of Agriculture weekly newsletter: Sign up here for weekly updates.

Agency of Ag Grants: AAFM Funding Opportunities Calendar

Business Counseling: https://workinglands.vermont.gov/business-toolkit-resources/business-planning

Working Lands Business and Service Provider Tool:

Online platform developed to make it easier to find service providers who can work with farm, food, forest, and wood products business owners.
Working Lands Business Development Directory

Working Lands and Act 250 FAQ: https://workinglands.vermont.gov/document/faq-act-250-and-working-lands-funds

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Adam's Berry Farm

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 (viability, 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

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Picture Courtesy
Small Axe Farm

Questions?

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