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WORKING LANDS ENTERPRISE INITIATIVE

Applying for a Working Lands Enterprise Fund Grant: Fiscal Year 2023 Business Enhancement 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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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/closing September 23
- Producer Association Grant – August/September 23
- Business Enhancement Grant (formerly known as Standard Business Grant) - opens September 23/closes October 28
- ARPA Primary Producer Impact Grant – pre-application opens late Fall 2023 (dates TBD)
- 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

Working Lands Enterprise Initiative: Eligibility

- All enterprises must be based in Vermont and registered with the Secretary of State at the time of application submission.
- All structures are eligible: Partnerships, Limited Liability Corporations, Sole Proprietorships, Cooperatives, etc., 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 (i.e. water quality, taxes) and in good standing with the State of Vermont at the time of submission and must remain so during entire grant period.
- Previous Working Lands Standard Business and COVID-19 Response Business Development grantees are eligible to re-apply for funding during Fiscal Year 2023. Previous Working Lands Supply Chain Impact, Market Level Infrastructure Impact, or Meat Slaughter and Processing Development Grants are eligible to apply for further Working Lands funding after three years, meaning that Fiscal Year 2020 and earlier grantees are eligible to apply this year.
- Applicants who have received Working Lands grants in the past will be asked to measure and report on results of previously funded projects and demonstrating how continued funding will grow or improve the program.
- Primary producers looking for larger dollar amount grants may be eligible to apply for the ARPA-Funded Primary Producer Impact Grant instead

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Picture Vermont Salumi/AR Market

Business Enhancement Grants

$20,000-35,000

Eligible Projects

- Market development – hiring a professional marketing/branding contractor to develop strategy and/or content, as well as 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
- Energy focused projects – efficiency enhancements, including 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

WLEF Grants: Request for Applications (RFA)

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VERMONT AGENCY OF AGRICULTURE, FOOD & MARKETS

Working Lands Enterprise Initiative Business Enhancement Grant[1]

FISCAL YEAR 2023 REQUEST FOR APPLICATIONS

KEY DATES

Request for Applications Release Date: September 9, 2022

Applicant Webinar with Q&A: September 15 at 12:00-1:00 PM

Application Opens for Submission: September 23, 2022, at 12:00 PM (noon)

Application Deadline: October 28, 2022 at 11:59 PM

Award Notification: January 2023

Estimated Project Start: February 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.

WLEF Grants: Request for Applications (RFA)

Primary RFA Components

- Key dates
- Program information
- Applicant eligibility
- Project eligibility
- Application in full
- Grant reporting requirements
- Review info/scoring criteria and weight

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Picture Courtesy
Fairmont Farm

WLEF Grants: Request for Applications (RFA)

Applicant/Grantee Expectations

- Clear goals, performance measures, and measurable outcomes
- Matching funds (shared costs) – minimum 100% of grant request (one-to-one ratio)
  - Cash sources
  - In-kind sources
- Letters of support

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Picture Courtesy
Southwind Forestry

Case Study Application: VT Tree Works – Goals and Outcomes

Goal	Performance Measures	Expected Measurable Outcomes
Increase annual production of butcherblock tops by 10%	Number of butcherblock tops produced per year	Expecting to increase from 209 tops produced to 230 in the following year.
Increase purchases of Vermont grown Maple Lumber by 25%	# of board feet of Vermont Maple purchases	22,750 board feet of Vermont Maple purchased in 2021. 30,000 board feet will be purchased in the coming year.
Reduce time to produce a butcherblock top by 30%	Production time to complete a top	Work that previously took 10 hours to complete will be able to be completed in 7 hours due to the efficiencies of the new equipment, by 2023.

Is the goal clear?
Is there a mechanism in place to measure progress?
What are the outcomes or impacts (in numbers)?

Picture Courtesy
Local Donut

Documents Required in Applications

All Grants and Contracts:

- Act 154 Water Quality Compliance Form

All Business Enhancement Grants:

- Business financial info – profit and loss statement, balance sheet, income and expense projections (1-3 years)
- *Business grants supported through Federal funds may have additional documents required*

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Picture Courtesy
Artesano Meadery

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.

VAAFM 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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