



VERMONT

WORKING LANDS ENTERPRISE INITIATIVE

Applying for a Working Lands Enterprise Fund Grant: Producer Associations and Service Providers 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 Funding Opportunities

Grants

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

Contracts

- RFP to be released September 2023





Service Provider and Producer Association Grant Timeline

- **September 6, 2023:** Request for Applications (RFA) released and application opens in WebGrants
- **September 13, 2023:** Applicant webinar with Q&A
- **October 16, 2023 at 8 pm:** Application closes
- **Early December 2023:** Applicants notified of decisions
- **January 2024:** Grantee documentation due
- **January 2024:** Estimated project start





Working Lands Enterprise Initiative: Eligibility

- All organizations 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 Service Provider and Producer Association recipients of Working Lands Service Provider Grants are eligible to re-apply for funding during Fiscal Year 2023.
- 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.
- Services must be provided to a new cohort of businesses for each funding period

Service Provider Grants *\$10,000-25,000*

Eligible projects:

- Provide direct technical assistance and/or indirect services to Vermont-based working lands businesses
- Can be either ongoing or pilot programs

Support to businesses includes the following areas:

- Market development, marketing plans, and sales strategies
- Business and financial planning
- Business responses to flooding, COVID-19 and/or other crises
- Enterprise transitions for next generation business owners and post-succession planning
- Access to capital
- Manufacturing efficiencies or process flow
- Business research and development
- Workforce development; professional skills training
- Exploration or expansion of production to address gaps along forest and agriculture supply chains (e.g., packaging, ingredients, etc.), including for substitution of imported items

Producer Association Grants *\$10,000- 25,000*

Eligible Applicants:

- Producer association groups, also known as trade associations, industry trade groups, business associations, sector associations, or an industry body, are organizations founded and funded by businesses that operate in a specific industry.
- Represent and promote Vermont agriculture, food, beverage, forest, or fiber products

Eligible Projects:

- Leadership and organizational development
- Governance
- Membership development
- Marketing and sales support
- Business and financial planning
- Research and development
- Network building and collaboration

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





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
- 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

Scoring Criteria

- Quality of Concept and Management Team: 20 points
- Expected Measurable Outcomes: 20 points
- Collaboration: 15 points
- Demonstrated Project Need: 15 points
- Budget: 15 points
- Engagement, Equity, and Equality: 10 points
- Financial Need: 5 points





Documents Required for Applications

All Grants and Contracts:

- Act 154 Water Quality Compliance Form

Producer Association Grants:

- At least one letter of support and/or commitment from the applicant's governing board *required* to justify the current need and importance of this project
- Additional letters of support from members are *optional*

Service Provider Grants:

- At least one letter of support and/or commitment from the applicant's governing board *required* to justify the current need and importance of this project
- Additional letters of support from businesses served or partners are *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?](#)

[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](#)

Follow us on Facebook and Instagram @vtworkinglands

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



Picture Courtesy
Small Axe Farm

Questions?