



VERMONT

WORKING LANDS ENTERPRISE INITIATIVE

Applying for a Working Lands Enterprise Fund Grant: Business Enhancement 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/January
- Small Farm Diversification Grant – January/February/March 2024
- Trade Show Assistance Grant – Winter 2024





Business Enhancement Grant Timeline

- **October 6, 2023:** Request for Applications (RFA) released and application opened in WebGrants
- **October 11, 2023:** Applicant webinar with Q&A
- **November 20, 2023 at 8 pm:** Application closes
- **Early January 2024:** Applicants notified of decisions
- **January 2024:** Grantee documentation due
- **February 2024:** Estimated project start



Business Enhancement Grant: Eligibility

- Organizations must be based in Vermont and registered with the Secretary of State
- 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)

Business Enhancement Grants

*\$15,000-
50,000*

Eligible Applicants:

- 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.

Eligible Projects:

- Market development
- Research and development
- Infrastructure development
- Workforce training and development

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) – 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

- Project Impact: 20 points
- Business Viability and Financial Management: 20 points
- Quality of Concept: 15 points
- Demonstrated Project Need: 15 points
- Goals and Expected Measurable Outcomes: 10 points
- Budget: 10 points
- Engagement, Equity, and Equality: 10 points





Documents Required in Applications

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

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?](#)

[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 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



Questions?

Picture Courtesy
Small Axe Farm