



Service Provider & Producer Association Grant

**Working Lands Enterprise Initiative Grant
Application Webinar**

Fiscal Year 2025

Photo at left: Sunrise Orchards

Accessibility Requests

To receive this information in an alternative format or for other accessibility requests, please contact:

Clare Salerno

Clare.Salerno@vermont.gov

802-917-2637 (call or text)

Hours: 7:45-4:30, Monday-Friday

Welcome!

- Please mute when not speaking.
- We will provide an overview of the Working Lands Enterprise Initiative and the application process before opening up for discussion.
- Use the chat or the raise hand function to ask a question.

Photo at right: Vermont Woodworking School



What is the Working Lands Enterprise Initiative?

Vision

Our shared working landscape is the foundation of Vermont's evolving culture, vibrant economies, healthy ecosystems, and sense of place.

Mission

To make strategic investments and develop policy recommendations that support a resilient and sustainable farm, food, and forest economy in Vermont.

- Created in 2012
- Manages and invests roughly \$1 million annually into agricultural and forestry-based businesses
- Awarded to date = \$16 million
- Fiscal Year 2025 = \$1 million available

Who is involved?

- The [Working Lands Enterprise Board](#) is made up of people like you!
 - Vermont farm, food, and forest product business owners
 - Business assistance organizations: Vermont Agricultural Assistance Corporation; Vermont Sustainable Jobs Fund; Vermont Housing and Conservation Board
 - State Agencies: Agriculture, Food & Markets; Commerce & Community Development; Department of Forest Parks and Recreation
- Working Lands grants applications are reviewed and awarded through a competitive review process guided by people with experience in:
 - Operating a farm, food, or forestry business
 - Providing business assistance services
 - Stewarding public dollars
 - And more

Annual Grant Cycle

July: State of Vermont Legislature and the Governor pass the state budget and approve appropriation to the Working Land Enterprise Fund (WLEF) for upcoming fiscal year.

June-August: WLEB convenes their annual symposium to strategize funding prioritization.

August-November: Agency staff conduct outreach and webinars to provide guidance on the upcoming application process.

September-January: Applications open and accept applications for about six weeks prior to application deadline. A group of 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 are notified by email in the order that applications closed. Applicants that were not awarded receive feedback from the WLEB on their applications.

December-May: Agency staff work with awardees to finalize grant or contract agreements for awarded projects.

Fiscal Year 2025 Grants

There are \$1 million available to award this year, through 3 grants:

- Service Provider & Producer Association Grant (grants \$10k-\$75k)
- Business Enhancement Grant (grants \$10k-50k)
- Trade Show Assistance Grant (grants up to \$5,000)

In years where the state budget provides special funds to WLEF, higher dollar grants for businesses may be offered, such as the Supply Chain Impact Grant.

Service Provider and Producer Association Grant Timeline

September 20, 2024: Request for Applications (RFA) released and application opens in WebGrants

September 24, 2024: Applicant webinar with Q&A

November 7, 2024 at 11:59 pm: Application closes

Early January 2025: Applicants notified of decisions

January 2025: Grantee documentation due

February/March 2025: Estimated project start

Photo at right: Milkweed Farm



Eligible Applicants

Two main applicant types:

- **Service providers**, which are organizations that provide business support services to agricultural and forestry businesses.
- **Producer associations**, which are groups that represent and promote Vermont agriculture, food, beverage, forest, or fiber products.

Applicants should be based in Vermont. Businesses or organizations headquartered outside of Vermont can be eligible if the project or service being proposed is 100% focused on Vermont's working landscape and businesses.

All business or organizational structures are eligible.

Past Working Lands grant or contract applicants or recipients can re-apply for funding.

Eligible Projects

Projects that provide direct or indirect services to support Vermont-based working lands businesses:

- Market development, marketing plans, and sales planning
- Business and financial planning
- Business responses to COVID-19, flooding, and/or other crises
- Succession planning for next generation business owners
- Access to capital
- Manufacturing efficiencies or process flow
- Business research and development
- Workforce development

Projects that develop a producer association:

- **Leadership and organizational development:** Leadership development, strategic planning, leadership transition support/succession planning; board training and capacity building, by-law development, committee work, staff recruitment and/or training
- **Membership development:** Member recruitment and outreach, networking across businesses, web/communications capacity building, member skill building and exchanges, development of digital portals or tools for members
- **Network building and collaboration:** Collaborations between producer associations for improved efficiency and organizational sustainability

Eligible Projects, continued

Minimum & Maximum Award

- \$10,000-\$25,000 for pilot projects (a new initiative or one begun in the last 1-2 years) or projects that serve businesses in a specific region of Vermont
- \$25,000-75,000 for projects that serve businesses statewide
- No matching funds are required for this grant.

Project Length

- 15 months (March 2025-June 2026)
- Grant funds cannot cover spending that happens before the grant is awarded in early 2025

Available Funds

Up to \$370,000 is available to award.

How to Apply

[Request for Applications \(RFA\)](#)

The RFA is a document with all of the information about the grant, including:

- Grant overview and contact information
- Eligibility criteria
- Application questions
- Scoring criteria
- Grant management requirements

Read the entire RFA before applying for a grant.

WebGrants

[WebGrants](#) is the online system where you actually complete and submit an application.

If you are awarded a grant, you will use WebGrants to submit reports and request payments.

Staff are available to help with any issues you may experience in the system.

The web address for WebGrants is:

<https://agriculturegrants.vermont.gov/>

How to Apply, continued

1. Review the full [Request for Applications](#) (RFA) for the complete details on eligible projects/applicants and the full application process.
2. [Register in WebGrants](#) (may take up to two business days).
3. Complete your application in WebGrants using our [Application Guide](#).

Photo at right: Vermont Cheese Council



Application Content

Applicant Information

- Includes voluntary demographic information, which is anonymous and not linked to your application

Project Information

- Summary of project, staff/partners involved, target audience, etc.

Goals & Expected Measurable Outcomes

Project Work Plan

Project Budget

- Quotes required for any budget items that cost more than \$5,000 (no quotes needed for salaries)

Additional Attachments

- For producer associations applying for organizational development activities, upload at least one letter of support from the association's governing board to justify the current need for and importance of this project.
- Other letters of support from members or organizational partners are optional for everyone.
- Can upload any other documents that you think would help explain the project to reviewers.
- Everyone must upload the completed [Water Quality Compliance Form](#).

Scoring Criteria

Scoring Criteria is on page 14 of the Request for Applications (RFA):

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

An application can be strong without scoring highly in all scoring categories.

Picture at right: Real Organic Project




WebGrants



<https://agriculturegrants.vermont.gov/>

Login

 Enter your user id and password

SIGN IN

[Forgot User ID?](#)

[Reset Password?](#)

[Click here to Register](#)

Announcements

Welcome to WebGrants!

WebGrants is the grants management platform used by the Vermont Agency of Agriculture, Food & Markets' Agricultural Development Division and the Northeast Dairy Business Innovation Center. A WebGrants account is required in order to apply for any grants from these organizations.

New users can create an account using the yellow 'Click here to Register' button to the left.

Registrations are manually approved and not processed outside State business hours: Monday through Friday, 7:45 AM to 4:45 PM. Please anticipate 1-2 business days for your registration to be approved.

1. You will receive **two emails** after you register. One will have your UserID. The second

Applicant Resources and Tips

- [Working Lands Frequently Asked Questions](#)
- Start early: compile documents, finalize project info, contact partners for letters of support
- Read the entire application guide and scoring criteria
- Don't be afraid to contact staff with questions. Staff can help you navigate WebGrants, advise whether your project is eligible, and more.
- To be fair to all applicants, staff cannot review your application.
- Staff cannot estimate whether your project will be funded. Focus on the scoring criteria and explaining how your project meets each element. Before beginning an application, read the [WebGrants Application Guide](#).
- Consider drafting responses in a separate document, then entering in WebGrants.

Applicant Resources and Tips, continued

- Include information that is key for someone who doesn't know anything about you or your organization.
- Include information about the problem the grant seeks to address. Explain what the current scenario is and what will change if the grant is awarded.
- Demonstrate the planning and resources invested so far in your organization and project.
- If you run out of room in the question boxes in the main application, you can always write up additional information and upload it in the attachments section at the end.
- Applicants not awarded can request feedback on their application to strengthen future applications.

Documents Required for Awarded Grantees

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

Past Grantees



Find more information about past grantees on the [funded projects](#) and [blog](#).

Photos left to right: VT Sheep & Goat Association, UVM Extension Our Vermont Woods, Clean Economy Works

Stay in Touch!

[VT Ag Bulletin Weekly Newsletter](#)

[VT Agency of Agriculture Food & Markets Funding Opportunities Calendar](#)

Follow us on Facebook and Instagram: @vtworkinglands

Questions? Contact:

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Questions?



Photo above: Winterwood Timber Frames