

Farm and Food Business Mini-Grant Request for Applications



For questions, please contact
mmartin@wvfoodandfarm.org

LOI Opens: [July 15, 2026](#)

LOI Due Date: [August 15, 2025](#)

LOI Review & Invitation to Apply: [September 15, 2025](#)

Full Application Due (invited applicants only): [October 10, 2025](#)

Award Notification: [November 2025](#)

Grant Period: [November 2025 - April 2026](#)

Overview:

The West Virginia Food and Farm Coalition, together with the West Virginia Department of Agriculture, are pleased to announce **Round 2** of a two-round competitive Request for Applications (RFA) for Farm and Food Business Mini-Grants. These grants are awarded to the West Virginia Department of Agriculture by the United States Small Business Administration (SBA) under H.R. 2617, the Consolidated Appropriations Act of 2023. The purpose of this program is to provide funding to farmers, independent grocery stores, and value-added producers who source local agricultural products. These funds are intended to support eligible entities in scaling or expanding operations, increasing operational efficiency, receiving specialized training or technical assistance, and/or upgrading facilities or equipment to meet FSMA, GAP, Organic Certification, or other regulatory requirements. The initiative also aims to ensure the continued development of investible businesses and start-ups that contribute to West Virginia's food security and economic growth.

Round 1 received an unprecedented number of high-quality applications, resulting in a highly competitive selection process. Round 2 is expected to be equally competitive, with only \$65,000 in funding remaining. As such, all applicants must first submit a formal Letter of Intent (LOI) clearly articulating the identified need and proposed use of funds in alignment with program priorities. LOIs will be reviewed by an independent panel, and the twelve highest-scoring applicants will be invited to submit a full application for funding consideration. Each applicant is eligible to receive funding only once through this program, regardless of whether they applied in Round 1 or Round 2. The maximum award for any single applicant is \$10,000. Applicants who were awarded funding in Round 1 are not eligible to receive additional funding in Round 2.

Submission and LOI Deadline

Email the completed Letter of intent to: Grants@wvfoodandfarm.org with "Farm and Food Business Mini-Grant LOI" in the subject line. To be considered for the first round of funding, your application must be received no later than 11:00 p.m. EST on August 15, 2025.

Contact:

Melissa Martin
Director of Program Development and Evaluation
West Virginia Food and Farm Coalition
E-mail: mmartin@wvfoodandfarm.org

Purpose:

The purpose of the Farm and Food business mini-grant program is to provide financial support to farmers, independent grocery stores, and value-added product makers who source and utilize locally grown agricultural products. Funding provides financial support to farmers, independent grocery stores, and value-added producers who source and utilize locally grown agricultural products. It aims to strengthen the local food system by enhancing the capacity of farmers to produce high-quality products sustainably, supporting independent grocery stores in connecting local producers with consumers, and empowering value-added producers to expand and innovate. Ultimately, this initiative seeks to promote economic resilience, community well-being, and sustainable practices within the local agricultural industry.

Funding Priorities:

These grant priorities are designed to address specific areas of need within West Virginia's farm and food sector, ultimately contributing to increased resilience, sustainability, and economic viability in the state's agricultural community.

- 1.) Strengthen the knowledge, skills, and expertise of farmers and food businesses through funding eligible entities to attend specialized training and/or acquire technical assistance/consultants.
- 2.) Upgrade facilities, equipment, and/or practices to obtain FSMA, GAP, Organic Certification, and/or other certification.
- 3.) Enable eligible entities to expand their production capacity to meet increasing demand for local agriculture products.
- 4.) Assist eligible entities in reaching new markets by improving the efficiency of their distribution networks.

Eligible entities:

1.) For-Profit Entity: To be eligible for a mini-grant, applicants must be West Virginia Residents who operate a food or farm business (as defined below) as a for-profit entity, including farmers, independent grocery stores, and value-added producers. *Nonprofit organizations will not be considered.*

Definitions of Eligible Farm and Food Businesses

- **Farmers:** Engaged in agricultural production, including crop cultivation, livestock farming, and specialty or niche farming, for the purposes of earning income are eligible to apply.

- Homesteaders who do not or do not plan to participate in selling agricultural products are not eligible entities.
- **Independent Grocery Stores:** Stores that actively source and sell locally grown agricultural products are eligible.
 - Chain or franchise grocery stores or convenience stores are not eligible entities.
- **Value-Added Producers:** Utilize raw agricultural materials from local sources to create value-added products such as jams, sauces, or artisanal goods and are currently selling product in the marketplace or intend on selling product in the marketplace are eligible for the mini-grant program.

2.) Local Sourcing Requirement: Applicants, particularly independent grocery stores and value-added producers, must demonstrate a commitment to local sourcing. "Local Sourcing" is defined as sourcing from West Virginia-grown or raised raw agriculture products. Eligible entities should be prepared to share both the percentage of local product that is sourced as well as the total dollar amount of local product that is sourced on an annual basis. Eligible entities may also express an intent to source raw local agricultural products for their business. In which case, their application should include a clear and detailed plan to achieve this goal.

This grant program is available to all types of farm businesses, covering a broad spectrum of agricultural operations including produce, livestock, agritourism, flowers, herbs, and more. Although registering with the West Virginia Secretary of State (WV SoS) is recommended to establish legal status and aid in grant administration, it is not a mandatory requirement for eligibility.

Allowable and Unallowable Expenses:

Please note that this grant program operates on a reimbursement basis. Eligible applicants must submit documentation of incurred expenses prior to requesting reimbursement. This documentation may include, but is not limited to, timesheets, contracts, invoices, credit card statements, and copies of checks. Expenses that are not adequately documented or were incurred before the grant approval date will not be eligible for reimbursement.

Allowable Expenses:

Funding from this mini-grant program can be used for capital investment, start-up costs, or expansion of agricultural operations. Allowable expenses include, but are not limited to:

- **Salary and Wages:** for staff required to participate in the proposed project. Wages must be documented prior to reimbursement.
- **Fringe Benefits:** of staff that are needed to participate in proposed projects. Note: the fringe rate should be a percentage of the salary/wages. *Fringe paid must be documented before it can be reimbursed.*
- **Equipment:** Equipment is defined as any single item that costs more than \$5000.
 - Examples include but are not limited to: tractors, side-by-sides, bobcats, other essential machinery, brush hogs, backhoes, front loaders, production line equipment, bottlers, fillers, cold storage, etc.
- **Supplies:** This includes the costs of any single item that is less than \$5000.

- Examples include but are not limited to:
 - Packaging and Marketing Materials: Expenses related to packaging materials, labels, signage, promotional materials, tents for events.
 - Construction Materials: Lumber, high tunnel or greenhouse components, fencing, bags of concrete, nails, screws, saws, drills, nail guns, doors, trim, etc.
 - Large items: Merchandising freezers, refrigeration, deli cases, etc. (Under \$5000 for an individual item).
 - Administrative supplies: computers, point-of-sale systems, software.
- **Contractors/Consultants:** This includes costs of paying individuals or companies to conduct work on your behalf.
 - Examples include but are not limited to:
 - Consultants hired to bring new products to market, develop marketing campaigns, conduct feasibility studies, train applicants in a specialized field, technical assistance providers, etc.
 - Contractors hired to do labor, construct items, or other professional services such as electrical, HVAC, or plumbing.
- **Other:**
 - Educational Opportunities: Expenses to attend FSMA, GAP, Organic Certification, and/or other certification training programs or specialized conferences.
 - Rental Expenses: Vehicles, warehouses, cold storage, equipment, property, etc.
 - Purchase of new property for the purpose of completing the agreed upon project.

Unallowable Expenses:

- Alcohol
- Food that is intended to be part of a meal (e.g. for an event)
- Personal home/house expenses
- Payments on loans, lines of credit, or other forms of debt
- Costs associated with lobbying or any other political activities
- Expenses unrelated to the expansion project such as raw materials, supplies, or inventory for day-to-day/current operations
 - Examples

Unallowable Expenses	Allowable Expenses
Seeds for the existing cornfield	Strawberry seedlings to expand/shift the business for more profitability.
Salary/Fringe for ongoing operations of the farm/food business	Salary/Fringe for staffing to work on the expansion/shift funded by this program, e.g. New marketing professional

Competitive Grant Application Review Process:

The competitive review process adheres to state policies and procedures and includes an independent review panel composed of at least three qualified experts. For Round 2, the panel will first evaluate and score all submitted Letters of Intent (LOIs) based on predetermined criteria. The twelve highest-scoring applicants will be invited to submit a full application. Due to the volume of submissions and the highly competitive nature of the program, individualized feedback will not be provided to applicants whose LOIs are not selected to advance.

Full applications submitted by invited applicants will be reviewed and scored by the same panel. The panel will recommend projects for funding to the West Virginia Food and Farm Coalition (WVFFC), with final approval made by the West Virginia Department of Agriculture. All review panel members will be free from conflicts of interest and are expected to conduct fair and impartial evaluations. WVFFC will notify all applicants of their status at each stage of the process, and contracts containing applicable terms and conditions will be issued to successful applicants.

Letter of Intent Scoring Guide:

<u>Criteria</u>	<u>Poor</u>	<u>Adequate</u>	<u>Exceeds</u>
Business Overview	Business description is vague, missing key details (e.g., what is produced, how long operating).	Provides a basic but clear summary of the business, with some relevant details.	Provides a well-rounded, clear, and concise description including what is produced, years in operation, and relevant background or experience.
Project Need and Alignment	A need is identified but is either unclear or not clearly tied to any funding priority.	A challenge or opportunity is presented and generally aligned with at least one program priority.	Clearly defines a specific, compelling need or opportunity and strongly aligns with one or more of the stated funding priorities.

Use of Funds	Use of funds is mentioned but lacks detail, clarity, or alignment with the identified project need.	Provides a summary of how funds will be used, aligns with eligible categories and project needs, and is within budget.	Offers a clear, well-organized breakdown of intended use of funds, fully aligns with the stated need, categories are appropriate, and budget is realistic and under \$10,000.
Anticipated Impacts	Describes vague or unrealistic impact; lacks measurable outcomes.	Identifies expected improvements with some specificity (e.g., modest sales growth, efficiency gains).	Clearly describes realistic, measurable impact of funding showing strong potential for business growth or efficiency.

Important dates and timeline:

LOI Opens: [July 15, 2026](#)

LOI Due Date: [August 15, 2025](#)

LOI Review & Invitation to Apply: [September 15, 2025](#)

Full Application Due (invited applicants only): [October 10, 2025](#)

Award Notification: [November 2025](#)

Grant Period: [November 2025 - April 2026](#)

Applications received after the deadline will not be considered.

A live webinar will be held on [July 29, 2025](#), at 7:00 p.m. EST to break down the RFA and describe the application process. This webinar will be recorded and posted on the West Virginia Food and Farm Coalition webpage.

To access the live webinar, please visit:

https://us02web.zoom.us/meeting/register/auZVyKiJQ8GL-27rjqk_Gg

Terms and Conditions:

Duration

The Round 2 grant period will begin November 2025, and will end no later than April 2026.

How to Apply:

For the Letter of Intent template please visit:

<https://www.wvfoodandfarm.org/lead-collection>

Specific questions? Email: mmartin@wvfoodandfarm.org

Funded through a Grant with the U.S. Small Business Administration.