

Farm and Food Business Mini-Grant Request for Applications



For questions, please contact
mmartin@wvfoodandfarm.org

Application Due Date Round 1: [August 12, 2024, 11:00 p.m. EST](#)

Training Webinar Round 1: [July 9, 2024, 7:00 p.m. EST](#)

Award Notification Round 1: [September 2024](#)

Application Due Date Round 2: [January 7, 2025, 11:00 p.m. EST](#)

Training Webinar Round 2: [TBD](#)

Award Notification Round 2: [February 2025](#)

Overview:

The West Virginia Food and Farm Coalition, together with the West Virginia Department of Agriculture are pleased to announce a competitive Request for Applications (RFA) for Farm and Food Business Mini-grants 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 and independent grocery stores or value-added producers who source local agricultural products. These funds are intended to support eligible entities in scaling/expanding operations, becoming more efficient in operations, receiving specialized training or technical assistance, and/or upgrading facilities/equipment to meet FSMA, GAP, Organic Certification, and/or other certification requirements. The initiative also aims to ensure the continuous creation of investible businesses and start-ups that will contribute to enhancing West Virginia's food security and economic growth objectives.

Grants may not exceed \$10,000 and are awarded through a competitive application process. Applicants will be permitted to receive funding just once through this program, even though there will be two rounds of funding. Applicants are expected to submit a compelling application that describes both the targeted need for the funds and how the funds will be used to meet the priorities of the funding program. \$250,000 in mini-grants will be awarded across two rounds of applications.

Contact:

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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 items that are less than \$5000 for any single object.
 - 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

Overview of the application / Scoring Guide:

The application may be found here. Please download a copy of the application, complete the application, and submit it with the required attachment to Grants@wvfoodandfarm.org.

1) Describe Your Business

- *Expected Response:* Provide a brief overview of your business, including its history, primary activities, and what it produces. Highlight any previous experience or achievements in local agricultural production, independent grocery retail, or value-added producers.
 - Market Analysis: Describe the characteristics of the people who are most likely to purchase from your business. Who do you target your marketing efforts toward?
 - Marketing Plan: What's your plan for marketing your products? How do you plan to determine the prices for your products, taking into account factors like production costs, competitors' pricing, and what your target customers are willing to pay?
 - Management Plan: What is the legal structure of your business? What's your plan for hiring and organizing your team to run your business effectively?
 - Operating Plan: What resources do you need to successfully operate your business, including equipment, supplies, inventory management, and staff?
 - Food Resiliency: How does your business address food resiliency in West Virginia?

2) Detail the Specific Need for Funding

- *Expected Response:* Clearly articulate the specific challenge or opportunity your business faces that this funding will address. Explain how this aligns with at least one of the mini-grant program's priorities.

3) Detail How You Intend to Use Funding

- *Expected Response:* Describe in detail how you plan to use the grant funds. Be specific about the activities, equipment purchases, training, or improvements you intend to make. Ensure that these uses align with the proposed project.

4) Explain How the Grant Will Impact Your Operations

- *Expected Response:* Discuss how the grant will help your business scale or become more efficient. Provide tangible examples, such as increased production numbers, expanded market reach, or enhanced operational efficiency.

5) Local Sourcing Efforts (Independent Grocers and Value-added producers only)

- *Expected Response:* Please detail your use of raw agricultural product and/or local sourcing of value-added products (for grocers) in your business model. Explain what products you use in your business and where you source from. Additionally, share both the estimated percentage of local sourcing and the annual dollar amount expended in local sourcing.

6) Other

- *Expected Response:* This section is an opportunity to share any additional information that you have not had room to share elsewhere in the application.

Sample Budget Summary:

Budget

Budget Summary - Please total each category in the detailed budget below in this section. *For example: Your supplies category includes \$400 for Buckets, \$500 for concrete, \$600 for wire. Your total supplies budget entered in this section is \$1,500.*

Category	Total Expense
Personnel/Salaries Costs	\$1,980
Fringe Costs	\$653.40
Supplies (Single item less than \$5,000 each)	\$1,226.50
Equipment (Single items over \$5000 each)	\$5,100
Travel	\$167
Consultant/Contractor	\$500
Other	\$250
Total (Not to exceed \$10,000)	\$9,876.90

Budget Detail:

Personnel/Salaries Cost

Item	Costs	Narrative Explanation for the need and use of the line item.
<i>Farm Director</i>	\$1,980	.033 FTE at a Salary of \$60,000 to attend 15-hour GAP workshop, 10 hours of technical

		assistance with a GAP plan consultant, and 45 hours completing the GAP audit.
Total	\$1,980	

Fringe Cost

Item	Costs	Narrative Explanation of the Fringe Rate
<i>Market Director</i>	\$653.40	The market director has a 33% fringe rate on \$1980
Total	\$653.40	

Supplies Cost

Item	Costs	Narrative Explanation for the need and use of the line item.
Concrete Mix 36 cu ft	\$266.50	\$26.65/bag/ 10 bags. Concrete will be used to pour a concrete pad for the new sugar shack. This will allow for better sanitation and more efficient syrup-making.
30x400' 6ml Poly Tubing	\$960	6 Rolls at \$160/per. Used for prepping items to ship, which is a portion of the expansion, being able to ship items.
Total	\$1,226.50	

Equipment Cost (Single Items over \$5000 each. E.x. Tractor attachment/implement

Item	Costs	Narrative Explanation for the need and use of the line item.
Maple Syrup Cooker/Evaporator	\$5,100	A new cooker/evaporator will allow the operation to become more efficient and expand the overall output by 50%.
Total	\$5,100	

Travel Cost - Make sure to include if this is mileage, fuel, vehicle rental, or hotel rental

Item	Costs	Narrative Explanation of the need for travel and where you are going.
Lodging	\$100	One night hotel stay in Charleston for GAP and traceability workshop
Mile Reimbursement	\$67	100 miles (50 miles each direction from home to Charleston for GAP workshop) at a Federal Reimbursement rate of \$0.67/mile
Total	\$167	

Consultant/Contractor-

Item	Costs	Narrative Explanation of the role the consultant/contractor will play
GAP Consultant	\$500	GAP Consultant to provide TA and support in creating FSMA plan 10 hours x \$50/hour
Total	\$500	

Other - For all other allowable costs, make sure you clearly define the costs.

Item	Costs	Narrative Explanation for the need and use of the line item.
GAP Training Registration Fee	\$250	2 day (15 hour) workshop on GAP and Traceability workshop
Total	\$250	

Competitive Grant Application Review Process:

The competitive application review process follows state policies and procedures and includes the use of an independent review panel of at least three experts or qualified individuals, which will review, score, and recommend applications to WVFFC for funding. The West Virginia Department of Agriculture will have the final funding approval. The review panel will evaluate proposals based on predetermined criteria. Review panel members will be free from conflicts of interest and will conduct fair and impartial reviews. WVFFC will notify successful and unsuccessful grant applicants once a final determination is made. Contracts containing terms and conditions will be issued.

Scoring Guide:

<u>Criteria</u>	<u>Does not Meet</u>	<u>Poor</u>	<u>Adequate</u>	<u>Exceeds</u>
Clear and adequate description of the business and its activities.	0 Points	1 Point	2 Points	3 Points
Market Analysis clearly identifies the target audience of the business.	0 Points	1 Point	2 Points	3 Points
Marketing Plan outlines marketing channels and pricing plan.	0 Points	1 Point	2 Points	3 Points
Management Plan provides the legal structure of the business and includes sufficient staffing plan to run the business.	0 Points	1 Point	2 Points	3 Points
The Operating Plan clearly describes the key resources needed by the business.	0 Points	1 Point	2 Points	3 Points
A clear need and/or opportunity is defined. The need/opportunity aligns with stated business goals.	0 Points	1 Point	2 Points	3 Points
The described need for funding aligns with the described businesses activities and opportunities.	0 Points	1 Point	2 Points	3 Points
Clear and logical description of how funding will impact the business.	0 Points	1 Point	2 Points	3 Points
The submitted budget aligns with the proposed project.	0 Points	1 Point	2 Points	3 Points
Independent Grocers and Value-added Producers Only	Does not source local	Sources very little	Sources a moderate amount	Sources a significant amount
The applicant demonstrates local sourcing at an amount that appears to be significant for their operation	0 Points	1 Point	2 Points	3 Points
Additional Points				
BIPOC-Owned Business	1 Point			

Veteran-Owned Business	1 Point	
Women-Owned (51% of the Business is owned by a female(s))	1 Point	

Important dates and timeline:

Application Live Round 1: [July 1, 2024](#)

Application Due Date Round 1: [August 12, 2024, 11:00 p.m. EST](#)

Application Live Round 2: [November 12, 2024](#)

Application Due Date Round 2: [January 7, 2025, 11:00 p.m. EST](#)

Applications received after the deadline will not be considered.

A live webinar will be held on [July 9, 2024](#), 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/j/86307106258>

Terms and Conditions:

Duration

The Round 1 grant period will begin September 1, 2024 and will end no later than August 31, 2025. Requests for reimbursement must be received no later than 11:00 p.m. August 31, 2025. The Round 2 grant period will begin February 10, 2025, and will end no later than February 9, 2026.

How to Apply:

For the application and all attachment templates 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.