



Resilient Food Systems Infrastructure Program (RFSI)

Request for Applications (RFA)

Application Due Date:

April 15, 2024, 4:00 P.M.

Overview

The U.S. Department of Agriculture (USDA), Agricultural Marketing Service (AMS), entered into a cooperative agreement with West Virginia for Resilient Food Systems Infrastructure Program (RFSI). RFSI funding is to develop and administer coordinated initiatives to build resilience across the middle-of-the-food-supply-chain in their state. Funds will support expanded capacity for the aggregation, processing, manufacturing, storing, transporting, wholesaling, and distribution of locally and regionally produced food products, including specialty crops, dairy, grains for human consumption, aquaculture, and other food products, excluding meat and poultry. This program is intended to provide similar support provided in other USDA funding for meat and poultry processing, **but for the non-meat and poultry sectors**. WVDA will make competitive subawards to support infrastructure in the middle-of-the-supply-chain for domestic food and farm businesses and other eligible entities.

Contact

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Resilient Food Systems Infrastructure Program
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Legislative Authority

Section 1001(b)(4) of the American Rescue Plan (ARP) Act of 2021 (Pub. L. 117—2), as amended, authorizes the United States Department of Agriculture (USDA), to make

grants and agreements to maintain and improve food and agricultural supply chain resiliency.

Purpose

The purpose of the Resilient Food Systems Infrastructure Program (RFSI) is to assist U.S. states and territories to build resilience in the middle-of-the-supply-chain and strengthen local and regional food systems by creating new revenue streams for their state's producers. States will make subawards in the form of Infrastructure Grants to middle-of-the-supply businesses to create more diverse local and regional market options and create more economic opportunities for communities, allowing them to retain more of the value chain dollar. RFSI investments aim to create a food systems infrastructure to support competitive and profitable market access for domestic farm products.

The purpose of the RFSI funding will be to build resilience in the middle of the supply chain. The WVDA will focus on the infrastructure grant activities that expand capacity for processing, aggregation, and distribution of agricultural products to create more and better markets for processors while prioritizing the individuals who meet the criteria outlined under WV Funding Priorities.

Outreach to Identify Funding Priorities

West Virginia funding priorities were structured based on discussions with colleges, universities, and producers. This group chose to allow very broad priorities to encompass the needs of the entire state.

West Virginia Funding Priorities

Priorities that are specific to West Virginia infrastructure projects include:

- Expanding processing capacities, including adding product types, increasing production volumes, and supporting new wholesale/retail product lines;
- Purchase and installation of specialized equipment, such as processing components, sorting equipment, packing and labeling equipment, or delivery vehicles; and
- Increasing storage space, including cold storage.

Ineligible products include: meat and poultry, wild-caught seafood, exclusively animal feed and forage products, fiber, landscaping projects, tobacco, or dietary supplements.

Funding will be prioritized for Infrastructure Grant applications that benefit the following:

- Underserved farmers and ranchers;
- New and beginning farmers or ranchers;
- Veteran producers;

- Processors and other middle-of-the-supply businesses owned by socially disadvantaged individuals, as defined by the Small Business Administration (SBA).

Projects that receive funding will focus on the following:

- Offer family-supporting job quality and treatment/safety of workers;
- Focus on small and medium-sized enterprises that add options and choices for consumers and producers (emphasis on value-added);
- Demonstrate local support for the project;
- Support underserved communities; and
- Are submitted by cooperatives, farmer- and worker-owned enterprises.

Eligibility

Entities eligible for Infrastructure Grant funding are as follows:

- Agricultural producers or processors, or groups of agricultural producers and processors
- Nonprofit organizations operating middle-of-the-supply-chain activities such as processing, aggregation, distribution of targeted agricultural products
- For-profit entities operating middle-of-the-supply-chain activities such as processing, aggregation, or distribution of targeted agricultural products, whose activities are primarily focused for the benefit of local and regional producers, and that meet the eligibility requirements of the SBA small business size standards are eligible.
 - o For-profit entities must meet the eligibility requirements of the SBA small business size standards matched to industries described in the North American Industry Classification System (NAICS). For more information on these size standards, please visit [SBA's Size Standards webpage](#). For a quick check on whether your business qualifies, please use the [Size Standards Tool](#).
- Local government entities operating middle-of-the-supply-chain activities such as processing, aggregation, distribution of targeted agricultural products
- Tribal governments operating middle-of-the-supply-chain activities such as processing, aggregation, distribution of targeted agricultural products.
- Institutions such as schools, universities, or hospitals bringing producers together to establish cooperative or shared infrastructure or invest in equipment that will benefit multiple producers middle-of-the-supply-chain activities such as processing, aggregation, distribution of targeted agricultural product.

Competitive Grant Application Review Process

Per USDA Agricultural Marketing Service (AMS) the competitive application review process should follow state policies and procedures and include following:

The competitive review process must:

- follow all applicable state policies and procedures;
- include the use of an independent review panel of experts or qualified individuals;
- include the factors and reasons for selecting an applicant and any changes in project proposal ranks/scores that may occur during the review process; and,
- maintain guidelines and procedures to prevent any conflict of interest or the appearance of a conflict of interest as required by 2 C.F.R. § 400.2(b).

Projects Eligible for Funding

A project is a set of interrelated tasks with a cohesive, distinct, specified, and defined goal. It follows a planned, organized approach over a fixed period and within specific limitations (cost, performance/quality, etc.). Additionally, it uses resources that are specifically allocated to the work of the project and usually involves a team of people.

Projects are different from other ongoing operations in an organization because, unlike operations, projects have a limited duration with a definitive beginning and end. A project will also have an overarching goal that the applicant wants to accomplish through a series of individual activities or tasks.

Infrastructure Grants will fund projects that expand capacity and infrastructure for the aggregation, processing, manufacturing, storing, transporting, wholesaling, or distribution of targeted agricultural products. Examples include:

- Expanding processing capacities, including adding product types, increasing production volumes, and supporting new wholesale/retail product lines;
- Modernizing equipment or facilities through upgrades, repairs, or retooling; (e.g., adapting product lines for institutional procurement or adding parallel processing capacity);
- Purchase and installation of specialized equipment, such as processing components, sorting equipment, packing and labeling equipment, or delivery vehicles;
- Increasing packaging and labeling capacities that meet compliance requirements under applicable laws (e.g. sealing, bagging, boxing, labeling, conveying, and product moving equipment);
- Increasing storage space, including cold storage;
- Develop, customize or install climate-smart equipment that reduces greenhouse gas emissions, increases efficiency in water use, improves air and/or water quality, and/or meets one or more of USDA's climate action goals;
- Modernize equipment or facilities to ensure food safety, including associated Hazard, Analysis, and Critical Control Points (HACCP) consultation, plan development and employee training; and
- Training on the use of all equipment purchased under the grant and associated new processes;

Available Funding

The WVDA will receive approximately \$3,600,000, from which multiple infrastructure grants will be awarded. Grant/award amounts are as follows:

- The minimum award will be \$100,000 and maximum will be \$3,000,000.

Infrastructure grant recipients are required to contribute 50% of the total proposed project cost as a match to federal funding.

Duration

Proposed projects require prior WVDA approval.

The grant period will begin September 1, 2024, and will end no later than May 24, 2027.

How to Apply

For an application and all attachments please visit:

<https://agriculture.wv.gov/ag-business/>

Specific questions? Email: grants@wvda.us.