

# Dairy Packaging Innovation Grant

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## FISCAL YEAR 2023 REQUEST FOR APPLICATIONS

The [Northeast Dairy Business Innovation Center](#) (NE-DBIC) announces the availability of funds through the Dairy Packaging Innovation Grant program, which will provide grants to projects that decrease environmental impacts of dairy product and supply chain packaging and increase marketability of dairy products. Grant funds are available to projects along the spectrum of research, development, and implementation and for projects at a variety of scales. Projects will be collaborative and include an educational or information sharing component.

Dairy processors, dairy producer associations and businesses/organizations in manufacturing, dairy supply chain, or institutions sectors that partner with dairy processors are invited to apply. Grants are available to applicants in all Northeast states: Connecticut, Delaware, Maine, Massachusetts, Maryland, New Hampshire, New Jersey, New York, Pennsylvania, Rhode Island, and Vermont.

## KEY DATES

RFA Release Date: June 13, 2023

Pre-Application Opens: June 29, 2023

Pre-Application Deadline: August 24, 2023, at 2:00 PM ET

Full Application Deadline: November 16, 2023, at 2:00 PM ET

## CONTENTS

I. PROGRAM OVERVIEW .....	3
II. FULL PRE-APPLICATION .....	12
III. PRE-APPLICATION SCORING CRITERIA .....	18
IV. FULL APPLICATION .....	19
V. GRANT MANAGEMENT & REPORTING .....	20

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## PROGRAM QUESTIONS

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Support is available during business hours: Monday–Friday, 7:45 AM to 4:30 PM EST. Assistance may not be available shortly before deadlines.

## RESOURCES FOR APPLYING

- WebGrants Guides and resources for registering and applying can be found on our [Resources for Applicants and Recipients webpage](#).

## REGISTERING IN WEBGRANTS

Applicants that have not previously registered in WebGrants will need to allow 1 – 2 business days for their registration to be processed. During that time, applicants will not be able to login to start an application. Please plan your application process accordingly.

## SUBMISSION POLICY

It is the applicant’s responsibility to adhere to all application instructions including the submission dates and times included in this request for applications (RFA). The Northeast Dairy Business Innovation Center via the Vermont Agency of Agriculture, Food & Markets (VAAFMM) will accept the last validated electronic submission through the grants management system, [WebGrants](#), prior to the posted deadline as the final and sole acceptable submission of an application.

Submission or re-submission of incomplete or delayed applications after the posted deadline, barring exceptional circumstances, will not be accepted.

**WebGrants will prevent applications from being submitted after the cut-off time.**

## SUBMISSION CONFIRMATION

When an application has successfully been submitted, the applicant will receive a confirmation email from <[agriculturegrants.vermont@mail.webgrantscloud.com](mailto:agriculturegrants.vermont@mail.webgrantscloud.com)>. Please add this email address to your “safe senders” list. If you do not receive this confirmation, please check your junk or spam folder.

# **I. PROGRAM OVERVIEW**

## **QUICK FACTS**

### **THE NORTHEAST DAIRY BUSINESS INNOVATION CENTER**

The Northeast Dairy Business Innovation Center (NE-DBIC), hosted by the Vermont Agency of Agriculture, Food and Markets (VAAFAM), is one of four USDA-AMS Dairy Business Innovation Initiatives (DBII) in the nation. The NE-DBIC serves the 11-state Northeast region which includes Connecticut, Delaware, Maine, Maryland, Massachusetts, New Hampshire, New Jersey, New York, Pennsylvania, Rhode Island, and Vermont by supporting dairy businesses through projects that promote the development, production, marketing, and distribution of dairy products. Projects target dairy farms and processors while providing additional support through market research and technical assistance. Since its inception in 2019, the Northeast Dairy Business Innovation Center has received \$38.77 million to support projects in the Northeast region of the United States.

### **ELIGIBILITY SUMMARY**

Dairy processors and producer associations are eligible to apply independently. Businesses or organizations in manufacturing, dairy supply chain, or institutions sectors that partner with dairy processors are also invited to apply.

### **MINIMUM & MAXIMUM AWARD**

Minimum: \$75,000

Maximum: \$350,000

Match: A 25% (cash or in-kind) match commitment is required.

Grant funds will be distributed to grantees over four payments throughout the course of the grant project.

### **TOTAL AVAILABLE FUNDS**

\$1,000,000

### **PROJECT LENGTH**

Approximately 18 months.

### **FUNDING SOURCE**

Funds are available through the Northeast Dairy Business Innovation Center which is made possible by funding through the U.S. Department of Agriculture's (USDA) Agricultural Marketing Service (AMS) through award AM22DBIVT1015-00.

### FUNDING OPPORTUNITY DESCRIPTION

#### BACKGROUND

Consumers are demanding increased sustainability of dairy products and packaging. To remain competitive in the marketplace, Northeast dairy packaging needs to evolve with an eye to both sustainability and marketability, while being financially accessible and scalable to meet the needs of Northeast dairy processors.

This grant is intended to support the research, development, and initial roll out of innovative packaging solutions for dairy products to support the decreased environmental impact of value-added products.

This grant builds on the 2022 grant round of the same name. Several projects awarded through the previous round targeted critical research and development needed to implement plastic film changeover, lightweighting of packaging components, and consumer education.

#### ELIGIBILITY

##### ELIGIBLE APPLICANTS

Applicants eligible for these funds must fall into at least one of the following categories:

- 1) Dairy processors that transform fluid milk, dairy components, or dairy mix sourced from the Northeast region into an edible product and are:
  - a. licensed dairy processor in compliance with all required state and/or federal standards, as required for the sales outlets reached during the timeframe of this project; and
  - b. headquartered or based in the Northeast.
- 2) Dairy producer association/dairy council<sup>1</sup> which represents and promotes dairy products and dairy businesses of the Northeast.
- 3) Packaging manufacturers that partner with at least one Northeast dairy processor, as defined above.
- 4) Supply chain businesses (distributors, aggregators, retailers, etc.) that partner with at least one dairy processor, as defined above. Applicant business must:
  - a. be headquartered or based in the Northeast; and
  - b. source dairy products within the Northeast; and
  - c. purchase from and sell to businesses in the Northeast.
- 5) Educational/research institutions that partner with at least one Northeast dairy processor, as defined above.

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<sup>1</sup> For the purposes of this grant a producer association group, also known as a trade association, industry trade group, business association, sector association or industry body, is an organization that: 1) was founded, 2) is funded by businesses that operate in a specific industry related to the dairy industry. Associations receiving the majority of their funds from producer check-off dollars are not eligible.

## SECTION I. PROGRAM OVERVIEW

While the following are **not required to apply**, if applicant is awarded, they will need to provide:

- Certificate of Insurance listing the VAAFM as an additional insured.
- Current IRS Form W-9.
- Unique Entity Identifier (UEI) number acquired via SAM.gov

### FUNDING PRIORITIES

Project approaches should address at least one of the following funding priority areas:

1. Projects that reduce packaging in the transportation of dairy products through distribution channels.
2. Transition away from packaging that is inherently non-recyclable (e.g., waxed ice cream containers, non-recyclable milk containers).
3. Utilizing dairy waste byproducts (such as whey or permeate) in packaging solutions for human food (e.g., plastic film or containers) or for other purposes (e.g., agricultural wrap).
4. Projects that center collaborations which increase consumer buy-in and adoption of practices that reduce packaging entering the waste stream.
5. Optimization of marketing/labeling/messaging for existing recycled, recyclable, reusable, and/or compostable packaging.
6. Packaging that increases shelf life.
7. Projects that engage qualified professional services and/or institutions with significant background in the proposed topic (e.g., research institutions, third party certifiers, advance centers).

### ELIGIBLE PROJECTS

Eligible grant activities and costs may include, but are not limited to:

- Research: Projects focused on research, development, and analysis must contain outcomes that can be implemented or adopted, and the grantee must show commitment to implementation resulting from research funding.
  - Understanding current conditions
    - Packaging lifecycle analysis.
    - Assessments/feasibility studies/market studies of current conditions:
      - existing/upcoming solutions and technologies.
      - costs of conversion.
      - bringing international packaging technology/manufacturing to U.S.
      - supply chain logistics pertaining to packaging.
      - processors' willingness/needs/requirements to adopt new packaging.
      - consumer preferences/awareness/marketing opportunities.
  - Ideation
    - Establishment of thinktanks/cohort groups across dairy, manufacturing, and disposal sectors.

## SECTION I. PROGRAM OVERVIEW

- Dairy processors banding together to approach non-conventional packaging partners.
- Research & development
  - Development of “hacks” on existing equipment to adapt to other packaging materials.
  - Development of new packaging types that can be reused or otherwise reduce environmental impacts.
  - Research and development of new packaging opportunities, including impacts on product quality and consumer preferences.
  - Sensory impacts of packaging alternatives.
- Implementation
  - Pilot runs of dairy product for quality assurance and consumer testing.
  - Packaging changeover and processor training on best practices.
  - Design or label improvements to increase marketing appeal and/or consumer packaging awareness.
  - Scaling, alteration of existing equipment that can utilize recycled and recyclable packaging materials.
  - Testing costs, testing/lab fees.
  - Specialized dairy processing equipment.
  - Supplies and materials.
  - Infrastructure upgrades:
    - Parts, materials/supplies (not construction).
    - Replacement parts for tools or equipment to accommodate new packaging.
    - Purchase of specialized equipment necessary for the research, scientific, or technical activities of the project.
    - Rental of general or specialized equipment.
  - Technical assistance, trainings, or workshops.
  - Professional services/contractors.
- Costs associated with:
  - Salaries/wages to perform grant activities.
  - Conferences, rental spaces.
  - Website, mobile app development.
  - Travel.

Please note that projects may only include allowable costs/activities as outlined in the [2021-2022 AMS Terms and Conditions](#) (8.0 Allowable Costs and Activities).

## REQUIRED PROJECT CRITERIA

The NE-DBIC seeks industry players who are actively engaged in innovation through their business and/or organization to develop projects that support modernized, climate-forward dairy packaging initiatives which address the full life cycle of packaging from production to disposal or reuse. Projects should increase collaboration across the dairy sector to ensure the greatest number of businesses will

## SECTION I. PROGRAM OVERVIEW

benefit. All projects must demonstrate sustainability, regional scalability, and marketability at the forefront by demonstrating:

1. The reduction or elimination of virgin plastics in packaging along the dairy supply chain, including during manufacturing, transportation, sales, and/or disposal. This can be demonstrated through one or more of the following:
  - Increased ratio of packaging that is reusable, more highly recyclable, or made from a greater volume of recycled materials.
  - Developing improved access to and utilization of recycled/recyclable packaging, compostable packaging, or other solutions to eliminating single use packaging for dairy products.
  - Developing improved access to and utilization of recycled/recyclable packaging, compostable packaging, or other solutions to eliminating single use packaging for dairy products.
2. Accessibility of packaging research/technologies/solutions that will benefit small and mid-sized Northeast dairy processors. This will be made evident by including an educational/knowledge sharing component for the industry as a significant component of each project proposal. (This does not exclude the ability for the grantee to acquire patent protections for technologies developed within this grant project.)
3. That the project leverages existing science, research, and/or knowledge on packaging innovation.
4. A collaborative project which leverages partnerships across dairy and manufacturing.
  - Applicant must include a minimum of one dairy processor as a key partner if applicant is not a dairy processor or producer association.

Projects which are focused primarily on research, development, and analysis must also contain outcomes that can be implemented or adopted, and the grantee must show commitment to implementation resulting from research funding.

Priority will go to projects that partner across the dairy and packaging manufacturing sector and those that can demonstrate how they will positively impact multiple dairy businesses and supply chain partners.

### EXAMPLES: ELIGIBLE PROJECTS

- *Research*
  - *Feasibility studies for translating international packaging technology/manufacturing to U.S.*
  - *Development and adoption of recyclable or compostable plastic film.*
  - *Developing a tool to assess lifecycle impact for dairy packaging.*
  - *Feasibility/consumer preference studies for reusable/returnable packaging.*
  - *Consumer study on changing consumer habits around purchasing practices of green packaging.*
  - *Comparative study of shelf life/quality/sensory impacts of different packaging options.*

## SECTION I. PROGRAM OVERVIEW

- *Cross-cutting collaborations*
  - *Associations/groups of processors developing relationships with manufacturers for packaging product development, requesting greater percentage of post-consumer recycled content, or bulk purchasing.*
  - *Collaborations with solid waste/composting entities to understand what disposal options are available to consumers in certain areas.*
- *Product and shipping packaging*
  - *Increased marketability of recycled/recyclable plastic milk jugs which optimizes surface area and incorporates innovative design/labeling, scalable for small fluid milk processors.*
  - *Adoption of bulk milk storage for high-use markets (such as restaurants, coffee shops, institutions).*
  - *Development of a reusable plastic or metal bottle and sanitizing process that can replace small-scale fluid milk glass bottles to streamline reusability, decrease breakage, and minimize transport costs.*
  - *Adoption of use of home-sized milk bags.*
  - *Implementing [how2recycle.info](https://www.how2recycle.info) labeling.*
- *Shipping/distribution packaging*
  - *Utilization of alternative packaging materials (hemp, wood fiber, other plant-based materials).*
  - *Access to reusable/recycled/recyclable/compostable shipping materials for direct-to-consumer online sales.*
  - *Development and substitution of packing materials for direct-to-consumer shipping (e.g., low grade wood shavings).*
- *Supply chain:*
  - *Develop streamlined process and buy in with retailers/distributors for managing increased reusability.*
  - *Increasing access to self-serve bulk milk to replace single serving bottles/cartons.*

## INELIGIBLE PROJECTS

- Projects which do not directly benefit Northeast dairy businesses.
- Projects that solely support the production/sales of raw fluid milk meant for human consumption.
- Projects that seek to benefit only one entity.
- Development of solely proprietary materials.
- Projects that do not integrate at least one dairy processor or producer.
- Projects that request reimbursements for costs already incurred.
- Projects that use grant funds for:
  - Construction.
  - Purchase or lease-to-own of land/building/facilities.



## SECTION I. PROGRAM OVERVIEW

- Purchase of general equipment (specialized dairy processing equipment is allowable, with restrictions).
- Purchase of vehicles (rental vehicles such as milk trucks, are allowable for the duration of the grant project).

### EXAMPLES: INELIGIBLE PROJECTS

- *A research university proposes a study of bioplastics without a focus on adoption and use.*
  - *What would make this eligible? If the university was able to show that the research was far enough along that it was ready for a partnership with a dairy processor that would serve as a testing phase for bringing the packaging to market, this would demonstrate collaboration and steps toward adoption.*
- *A dairy processor who seeks to use funds to collaborate with a plastic manufacturer to develop a new plastic packaging without demonstrating improved lifecycle and environmental impacts.*
  - *What would make this eligible? If this processor could show they were working to develop an easily recyclable plastic container that would be piloted in collaboration with other Northeast dairy processors, this would increase the competitiveness of the application.*
- *A manufacturer has developed a hemp-based, biodegradable dairy packaging product and wants funds to help market it to dairy processors.*
  - *What would make this eligible? The manufacturer could develop partnerships in a locality with both 1) key solid waste/disposal companies that can, in fact, compost the new packaging and 2) dairy processors that sell into that market, to develop a complete a lifecycle plan for that product.*

If you need help to ensure that your project concept is eligible, please reach out. NE-DBIC staff can talk with applicants about their project concept to ensure it is in alignment with the intent of the grant program.

## MATCHING FUNDS

All proposals must show matching funds which represent at least 25% of the grant request to go toward the grant project. For instance, for a grant request of \$100,000, the applicant must demonstrate at least \$25,000 in match.

Matching funds may be contributed by the applicant or by another organization. Matching funds must be expended within the grant period.

The 25% required match may be any combination of cash and in-kind funds in any expense category. The applicant can use other funds (state or loan, other non-Federal money) as a match to their NE-DBIC project if there is not any such restriction in the agreements for those funds. Other federal funds may not be used as match for this grant. NE-DBIC funds may not be used as match for other grants.

**Examples of cash match** include funds in the bank, funds contributed by another organization, bank loans, applicant labor, and compensation of employees. Labor rates should be in line with current market rates.

## SECTION I. PROGRAM OVERVIEW

**Examples of in-kind match** include goods or services provided during the grant period for which no expenditure is made (e.g., contractors, consultants, supplies, or equipment provided pro bono for the project; volunteer labor; and/or donated supplies that are not part of the normal cost of doing business). In-kind contributions must be made during the grant agreement period and be directly related to the project.

**Example of an eligible budget:**

Expense Category	Grant Funds Requested	Applicant Contribution - Cash Match	Applicant Contribution - In-kind Match	Project Total
Specialized Equipment	\$80,000.00	\$12,000.00	\$0.00	\$92,000.00
Supplies	\$13,000.00	\$6,000.00	\$0.00	\$19,000.00
Contractual/Consultant	\$0.00	\$3,000.00	\$0.00	\$3,000.00
Training	\$2,000.00	\$0.00	\$0.00	\$2,000.00
Travel	\$0.00	\$0.00	\$0.00	\$0.00
Personnel	\$0.00	\$1,500.00	\$0.00	\$1,500.00
Fringe	\$0.00	\$0.00	\$0.00	\$0.00
Other	\$5,000.00	\$1,500.00	\$1,700.00	\$8,200.00
<b>TOTALS</b>	<b>\$100,000.00</b>	<b>\$24,000.00</b>	<b>\$1,700.00</b>	<b>\$125,700.00</b>

## LETTERS OF COMMITMENT/SUPPORT

At least one letter of commitment or support is required for the pre-application. For those applications submitted from entities other than dairy processors or producer associations, the pre-application stage must include letters of commitment from all named dairy processor partners included in the project.

- **Letters of Commitment** should articulate project partners' involvement and identify the contributions they will make to ensure the project's success. Match contributors should describe and assign value to their match commitment (including financial or in-kind support).
- **Letters of Support** should articulate general support from other organizations/businesses and should describe the benefits of the project both for the applicant business and the greater dairy sector.

## HOW TO APPLY

All applications must be submitted via the WebGrants system at [agriculturegrants.vermont.gov](https://agriculturegrants.vermont.gov). No paper applications will be accepted. Pre-applications will be accepted from June 29, 2023 to August 24, 2023 at 2:00 PM ET. For those applicants invited to submit a full proposal, the deadline for submitting a full application is expected to be November 16, 2023 at 2:00 PM ET.

Applicants that have not previously registered in WebGrants will need to allow 1-2 business days for their registration to be processed. During that time, applicants will not be able to login to start an application. Please plan your application process accordingly.

## SECTION I. PROGRAM OVERVIEW

We strongly advise that you submit your application ahead of the deadline. Be advised that technical assistance with WebGrants may not be available shortly before deadlines; please plan accordingly.

### APPLICATION REVIEW

Pre-applications and full applications will be reviewed by a multi-state NE-DBIC advisory committee comprised of representatives from Northeast state agriculture agencies/departments, agriculture extension agencies, manufacturing stakeholders, and dairy industry stakeholders. See [Section III: Scoring Criteria](#).

### AWARD INFORMATION

All applicants will be notified of the NE-DBIC decision of whether or not they have been selected to submit a full proposal for their proposed project. Awards will be approximately 18 months in length.

### KEY DATES

#### DATES MAY BE SUBJECT TO CHANGE

<b>June 13, 2023</b>	Request for Application (RFA) released
<b>June 29, 2023</b>	Pre-application application period opens
<b>August 24, 2023 at 2:00 PM ET</b>	Pre-application closes
<b>September 2024</b>	Applicants notified of pre-application decision; invitations to submit full application
<b>Mid-November 2024</b>	Full application closes
<b>Mid-January 2024</b>	Project pitch to review committee for all applicants with grant fund requests of \$150,000 or more
<b>Late-January 2024</b>	Applicants notified
<b>February/March 2024</b>	Estimated grant start date
<b>August 31, 2025</b>	Project end date

## II. FULL PRE-APPLICATION

A pre-application provides a summary of your project idea and estimated budget. After reviewing pre-applications, the review committee will invite applicants with the top-ranking proposals to submit full applications. The pre-application content is listed below but may be subject to change. Please reference the [WebGrants Application Guide](#) for guidance on completing your application in the WebGrants system.

### APPLICANT INFORMATION

#### Applicant Information

- Business/organization name.
- Legal entity. *E.g., sole proprietor, general partnership, LLC, corporation, etc.*
- Primary grant contact.
- Grant contact's title/position.
- Phone.
- Email.
- Website.
- Provide any social media handles your business has.
- How did you learn about this grant opportunity?
  - NE-DBIC newsletter, State agriculture dept./agency, Local ag-extension, News outlet, Social media, Friend/family, or Other.
  - If Other, please list.
- Are you completing this application on behalf of the grant contact person listed above? If yes:
  - What is your relation to the grant contact person?
    - Employee of the applicant business, technical service provider, grant write, family/friend, or Other.
    - If Other, please list.
  - Name of person completing this application.
  - Your organization/business.

#### Applicant Eligibility

- Is the application from a licensed dairy processor that processes fluid milk, dairy components, or dairy mix and is in compliance with all required state and/or federal standards?
  1. If yes:
    - Is the applicant headquartered or based in a Northeast state (CT, DE, MA, MD, ME, NH, NJ, NY, PA, RI, or VT)?
  2. Does the applicant source or produce milk that originates within the Northeast?
  3. Does the applicant's business manufacture dairy products within the Northeast?
  4. Describe your business in terms of size (gross sales, number of employees, production volume), scope, markets, and number of years in business
- Is the application from a dairy producer association that represents and promotes dairy products and dairy businesses of the Northeast? *For the purpose of this grant, a dairy producer association group, also known as a trade association, industry trade group, business association,*

## SECTION II: FULL PRE-APPLICATION

*sector association or industry body, is an organization founded and funded by businesses that operate in the dairy industry. If yes:*

- Describe the producer association, addressing: 1) founding members, 2) how association is funded, 3) industry scope covered by the association, and 4) association activities.
- If the association encompasses products other than dairy, describe how you will ensure that the project will benefit dairy only. *If the producer association applicant only supports dairy, enter N/A.*
- Does this association receive funds from producer check-off dollars? If yes,
  - What percent of the association's annual operating budget comes from producer check-off dollars?
- Is the application from a packaging manufacturer?
  - Describe your business in terms of size (gross sales, number of employees, production volume), scope, markets, and number of years in business.
  - Describe your business's prior work with developing alternative packaging types.
  - Describe your business's prior work with dairy product packaging.
  - List all dairy processor partner(s) for this project with their location, size, and product types. *A minimum of one Northeast dairy processor must be an active participant in this project.*
- Is the application from a supply chain business? *Supply chain businesses include, but are not limited to, retailers, distributors, and copackers.*
  - Describe the business in terms of size (gross sales, number of employees, production volume), scope, product offerings, distribution reach, and number of years in business.
  - Do you primarily source dairy products from within the Northeast?
  - Describe the business's approach to sourcing dairy products.
  - List all dairy processor partner(s) for this project with their location, size, and product types. *A minimum of one Northeast dairy processor or producer association must be an active participant in this project.*
- Is the applicant from an educational/research institution? If yes:
  - Describe the partnering dairy processors included in this proposal in terms of size (gross sales, number of employees, production volume), scope, markets, and number of years in business. *A minimum of one Northeast dairy processor or producer association must be an active participant in this project.*

### Entity Background

- Has your business/organization received any federal or state grant in the past 5 years?
- Have you or your project partners received any (federal, state, or other) grants **for this specific project** in the past 5 years? If yes:
  - List the grants received.
  - Describe the work done under these grants.
  - How will the work in this grant differ from and/or build upon that work?

## SECTION II: FULL PRE-APPLICATION

- Have you applied for, or do you plan to apply for, other grant(s) in conjunction with this grant? If yes:
  - Please list the other grants you will apply for/have applied for.
- Has your business/organization ever been unable to complete or adhere to granting requirements for a grant you were awarded? If so:
  - Describe the circumstances that prevented you from completing/adhering to the requirements of your grant(s)
- Will you be using loans to supplement this application?
- Describe why you and your staff are qualified to complete this project, as proposed.
- Rate your business/organization's experience in implementing similar past work/projects related to research and development and/or dairy processor innovation. (*Select from dropdown: significant experience, some experience, no experience*)
- Do you currently work with a business planner to support the financial health and future planning of your business? If yes, list the name/organization
- Have you received technical assistance in the preparation of this project, or do you plan to receive related technical assistance during the course of this grant project? If yes, List name/organization providing relevant technical assistance.

## PROJECT OVERVIEW

### Project Overview

- Summarize your proposed project in a couple of sentences.
- Provide a project description which comprehensively describes your vision of this project. Describe the 1) issues you plan to address and why they are relevant and important, 2) goals for the project, 3) outline of activities you plan to include, 4) opportunities that you see for partnership, and 5) desired outcomes. Include any background or context, as needed.
- Identify 1 – 3 funding priorities, as defined in the RFA, that your project addresses and provide an explanation of how your project aligns.
- What will success look like for this project?
- Describe who will benefit from this project and how they will benefit.
- The work conducted under this grant must have an educational/information sharing component to benefit the greater Northeast dairy sector. Describe in depth how 1) the work done under this grant will be shared, be made accessible, and/or replicable to others, and 2) who the target audience will be.
- What challenges do you anticipate and how do you plan to adapt to them?
- How do you plan to sustain the activities implemented through this project beyond the grant period?

### Letters of Commitment or Support

- At least one letter of commitment or support is required for the pre-application. For those applications submitted from entities other than dairy processors or producer associations, the

## SECTION II: FULL PRE-APPLICATION

pre-application stage must additionally include letters of commitment from all named dairy processor/dairy producer association partners included in the project.

- If the applicant is invited to submit a full application, they will be required to include a minimum of 5 letters which include letters of commitment from all match contributors.
- Additional letters will increase the competitiveness of the application.
  - **Letters of Commitment** should articulate project partners' involvement and identify the contributions they will make to ensure the project's success. Match contributors should describe and assign value to their match commitment (including financial or in-kind support).
  - **Letters of Support** should articulate general support from other organizations/businesses and should describe the benefits of the project both for the applicant business and the greater dairy sector.

### BUDGET TABLE

*Please complete the following budget table with estimates of grant and match amounts. For those applicants invited to submit full applications, total grant budget amounts will be permitted to be adjusted up to 25% from the pre-application to full application. Line items may be changed without restriction.*

*Grant funds: Grant funds requested must align with the allowable costs detailed in the [2021-2022 AMS Terms and Conditions](#).*

*Match contributions: Projects must demonstrate matching funds of at least 25% as cash and/or in-kind sources. (e.g. \$100,000 of requested funds requires at least \$25,000 in match contributions.)*

- *Do not need to adhere to AMS allowable costs.*
- *Match contributions are not required to reflect 25% per expense line, but they must make up 25% of the total grant ask. (For example, a grant request for \$70,000 in supplies and \$50,000 in personnel could be matched with \$60,000 of equipment.)*

#### Budget Table (example)

Expense Category	Grant Funds Requested	Applicant Contribution - Cash Match	Applicant Contribution - In-kind Match	Project Total
Specialized Equipment	\$80,000.00	\$12,000.00	\$0.00	\$92,000.00
Supplies	\$13,000.00	\$6,000.00	\$0.00	\$19,000.00
Contractual/Consultant	\$0.00	\$3,000.00	\$0.00	\$3,000.00
Training	\$2,000.00	\$0.00	\$0.00	\$2,000.00
Travel	\$0.00	\$0.00	\$0.00	\$0.00
Personnel	\$0.00	\$1,500.00	\$0.00	\$1,500.00
Fringe	\$0.00	\$0.00	\$0.00	\$0.00
Other	\$5,000.00	\$1,500.00	\$1,700.00	\$8,200.00
<b>TOTALS</b>	<b>\$100,000.00</b>	<b>\$24,000.00</b>	<b>\$1,700.00</b>	<b>\$125,700.00</b>

### BUDGET NARRATIVE

#### Budget Narrative

**For the pre-application**, this section is meant to provide an abbreviated – yet comprehensive – overview of your proposed project.

**If invited to submit a full application**, you will have the opportunity to edit this form in order to more fully detail your project, and to incorporate any review feedback resulting from your pre-application.

- Total funds requested for this grant. *If invited to submit a full application, grant request amount can be changed up to 25% from the pre-application request.*
- Amount of matching funds. *25% cash and/or in-kind match is required for this grant.*
- Provide detailed information regarding each match source. Provide 1) match source, 2) each contribution amount (and specify if it is cash or in-kind), and 3) describe how the contribution will be used to accomplish your project activities. *Outside match contributors are required to provide a letter of commitment in the Full Application stage.*
- Are all matching funds/contributions committed at this time? If not:
  - Provide the sources that are uncommitted and timeline/plan for securing these commitments.

***Complete the following questions only for expenses that are covered by grant funds (not matching funds, which should be detailed in questions above). Please thoroughly describe each category for which you are requesting grant funds, answering all parts of each question.***

- Are 'Personnel' expenses included in the 'Grant Funds Requested' column of your above budget?
  - Personnel: for each individual whose time can be directly attributed to grant activities, provide 1) individual's title and role, 2) hourly rate, 3) expected number of hours, 4) grant funds requested
- Are 'Fringe Benefit' expenses included in the 'Grant Funds Requested' column of your budget? If yes:
  - Fringe Benefit: for each of the project's salaried employees, provide the 1) fringe benefit rate and 2) grant funds requested.
- Are 'Training' expenses included in the 'Grant Funds Requested' column of your above budget? If yes:
  - Training: for each training, provide 1) description, 2) estimated cost, and 3) justification for how the expense is necessary for the success of this project
- Are 'Contractual/Consultant' expenses included in the 'Grant Funds Requested' column of your budget? If yes:
  - Contractual/Consultant: List each anticipated contractor/consultant service. For each, provide: 1) grant funds requested, 2) description of services, and 3) justification for why the services are necessary for the success of this project:
- Are 'Supply' expenses included in the 'Grant Funds Requested' column of your above budget? *Supplies include materials, supplies, and fabricated parts costing less than \$5,000 per unit.* If yes:



## SECTION II: FULL PRE-APPLICATION

- Supplies: List each supply (with a description if needed). For each, provide: 1) per unit cost, 2) # units purchased, 3) grant funds requested, and 4) justification for how this supply is necessary for the success of this project.
- Are 'Equipment' expenses included in the 'Grant Funds Requested' column of your above budget? *Includes rental equipment or purchase of specialized dairy equipment needed for grant activities.* If yes:
  - Equipment: List each piece of equipment (with description if needed) and for each, indicate: 1) whether it is a rental or purchase, 2) grant funds requested per piece, and 3) justification for how this equipment is necessary for the success of this project:
- Are 'Travel' expenses included in the 'Grant Funds Requested' column of your above budget? *Please refer to [Allowable Costs in the AMS Terms and Conditions](#) for details.*
  - Travel: For each trip: 1) list expense types (airfare, car rental, hotel, meals, mileage, etc.) and associated grant funds requested, 2) number of travelers, and 3) justification for how this travel is necessary for the success of this project.
- Are 'Other' expenses included in the 'Grant Funds Requested' column of your budget? *E.g. meetings/conferences, communications/marketing, rental expenses, ads, publication costs.* If yes:
  - Other: Include any expenses not covered in any of the previous budget categories. Be sure to break down costs into cost/unit and provide justification for how the expense is necessary for the success of this project.

## III. PRE-APPLICATION SCORING CRITERIA

### REVIEWER SCORING CRITERIA

#### Project Proposal (100 points)

Project overview illustrates an impactful and realistic project that supports modernized, climate-forward dairy packaging initiatives for the region. Proposal indicates an understanding of the relevant issues and shows a well-conceived set of goals and desired outcomes as well as planned activities and partnerships.	25 points
Application clearly describes a vision for the project which demonstrates: 1) reduction or elimination of virgin plastics in packaging along the dairy supply chain, 2) accessibility of packaging research/technologies/solutions that will benefit small and mid-sized Northeast dairy processors, 3) leveraging existing science, research, and/or knowledge on packaging innovation, and 4) collaborative partnerships across dairy and manufacturing.	20 points
Applicant demonstrates that their project is well-aligned with funding priorities and provides compelling details to support that.	15 points
Applicant provides a compelling educational/information sharing component of their project that can benefit the Northeast dairy sector.	10 points
Applicant has included at least one letter of commitment/support which demonstrates the potential for project success. Applicants who are not processors or producer associations have included letters of commitment from each listed processor/producer association partner.	10 points
Budget and budget overview are realistic and sufficient to achieve their project.	15 points
Applicant has identified their intended match sources. Applicant has match commitments secured or a plan to secure them.	5 points

## IV. FULL APPLICATION

Applicants whose pre-application is approved for advancement will be able to begin editing their full application at any point after receiving their approval notification by email. Invitations to submit a full application will include a supplement to this RFA with an outline of all required full application content. In addition to any needed edits to the information required in the pre-application, the full application will require additional information to be submitted.

Additional details regarding the full application will not be shared publicly and will be sent only to applicants whose pre-application has been approved for advancement. Application content will include:

- Applicant entity history, including a business plan.
- Project details about project team and partnerships.
- Project workplan, activities, and key dates.
- Expected outcomes.
- Additional letters of support/commitment.
- Additional documentation to increase the competitiveness and context for the project.
- Budget and detailed budget narrative.
- Anticipated program income generated by grant activities.

All projects requesting \$150,000 or more in grant funds will be required to present a brief virtual video pitch to a subset of the review committee. It is optional for applicants with projects requesting less than \$150,000 to provide a project pitch. Each pitch will be 10 – 15 minutes in length and should include a project overview, explanation of project feasibility, and anticipated project impacts on the dairy supply chain and/or market sector.

## V. GRANT MANAGEMENT & REPORTING

### GRANT AGREEMENT & PAYMENT

Prior to receiving funding, successful applicants must sign a grant agreement with the Northeast Dairy Business Innovation Center via Vermont Agency of Agriculture, Food & Markets (VAAFAM) indicating their intent to complete the proposed project and authorizing NE-DBIC/VAAFAM to monitor the project's progress. The grant agreement will include provisions (terms and conditions) set by the State of Vermont as well as any program-specific requirements. Review [Attachment C - Standard State Provisions and Contracts and Grants](#) (12/15/2017 Revised).

Prior to commencement of work and release of any payments, grantee will be required to submit:

- A. A certificate of insurance consistent with the requirements set forth in Attachment C of the grant agreement. [Not required if grantee has a current certificate of insurance on file with the Agency of Agriculture.]
- B. A current [IRS Form W-9](#) (Request for Taxpayer Identification Number and Certification), signed within the past six months
- C. A Unique Entity Identifier number, acquired through SAM.gov
- D. Documentation verifying pledged matching funds, as applicable.

### GRANTEE PAYMENT SCHEDULE

- **Initial payment: 40%** of the total grant will be paid to the grantee upon receipt of certificate of insurance and IRS Form W-9, confirmation of Unique Entity Identifier number, and claim submission in WebGrants. Failure to submit all required documents and an executed copy of the grant agreement within 30 days of receipt may result in the loss of awarded funds.
- **Second payment: 20%** of the total grant will be issued upon approval of grantee's first interim performance report by the grant manager and receipt of a claim in WebGrants.
- **Third payment: 20%** of the total grant will be issued upon approval of grantee's second interim performance report by the grant manager and receipt of a claim in WebGrants.
- **Final payment: 20%** of the total grant will be issued upon approval of grantee's final performance report, the completion and submission of a survey provided by the grant manager, and receipt of a claim in WebGrants.

The final performance report is due no later than 30 days after the grant end date. Final invoices must be submitted to the State within 45 days of the grant expiration date. Invoices submitted before the completion of an interim or final report will not be paid until the report has been received, reviewed, and accepted by the grant manager. The State cannot reimburse the grantee for work performed after the expiration date of the grant.

## **REPORTING REQUIREMENTS**

1. Grantees will submit two Interim Performance Reports mid-project which may include:
  - a. Summary of status of grant activities.
  - b. Description of successes and challenges.
  - c. Discussion of any modifications deemed necessary and justification for changes.
  - d. Documentation of any marketing/promotion of project.
  - e. Photos/documentation that demonstrates grant activities.
  - f. Expenditures to date.
2. Grantees will submit a Final Performance Report and complete a survey no later than thirty (30) days from the grant end date. Final reports may include:
  - a. Summary of achievements from this project including impacts on the community, public, and other businesses/organizations.
  - b. Description of any challenges or changes to the project.
  - c. Lessons learned from this project.
  - d. Opportunities that arose from the completion of this project.
  - e. Plans to build on the work completed under this grant.
  - f. Representative documentation and photos representative of the full breadth of activities under this grant.
  - g. Final expenditures.
  - h. Project outcomes:
    - i. Results of grantees measurements of success.
    - ii. New and existing outlets.
    - iii. Sales increases.
    - iv. Increases in revenue.
    - v. Jobs maintained/created.
3. A post-grant survey will include questions which pertain to metrics regarding the following:
  - a. Increase in consumption of and access to dairy projects.
  - b. Increase in sales of dairy products.
  - c. Development of new market opportunities for dairy producers and processors.
  - d. Dairy farmer/processor satisfaction of grant activities.

The NE-DBIC/VAAFM reserves the right to utilize and/or summarize information and photos provided through these reports to use on publications/promotions.

NE-DBIC via VAAFM reserves the right to modify the above reporting requirements during the project. Information submitted in any report under this program will be a public record. Failure to adhere to reporting requirements and deadlines may disqualify the grantee from future grant opportunities through the NE-DBIC or State of Vermont.

## CERTIFICATE OF INSURANCE

A certificate of insurance (COI) is a common requirement for businesses and organizations; most agents are familiar with it. The State of Vermont must be listed as an additional insured on the grantee's policy. We recommend forwarding the insurance requirements below to prospective insurers for accuracy:

*Insurance: Before commencing work on this Agreement the Party must provide certificates of insurance to show that the following minimum coverages are in effect. It is the responsibility of the Party to maintain current certificates of insurance on file with the State through the term of this Agreement. No warranty is made that the coverages and limits listed herein are adequate to cover and protect the interests of the Party for the Party's operations. These are solely minimums that have been established to protect the interests of the State.*

*Workers Compensation: With respect to all operations performed, the Party shall carry workers' compensation insurance in accordance with the laws of the State of Vermont. Vermont will accept an out-of-state employer's workers' compensation coverage while operating in Vermont provided that the insurance carrier is licensed to write insurance in Vermont and an amendatory endorsement is added to the policy adding Vermont for coverage purposes. Otherwise, the party shall secure a Vermont workers' compensation policy, if necessary, to comply with Vermont law.*

*General Liability and Property Damage: With respect to all operations performed under this Agreement, the Party shall carry general liability insurance having all major divisions of coverage including, but not limited to:*

*Premises - Operations*

*Products and Completed Operations*

*Personal Injury Liability*

*Contractual Liability*

*The policy shall be on an occurrence form and limits shall not be less than:*

*\$1,000,000 Each Occurrence*

*\$2,000,000 General Aggregate*

*\$1,000,000 Products/Completed Operations Aggregate*

*\$1,000,000 Personal & Advertising Injury*

*Automotive Liability: The Party shall carry automotive liability insurance covering all motor vehicles, including hired and non-owned coverage, used in connection with the Agreement. Limits of coverage shall not be less than \$500,000 combined single limit. If performance of this Agreement involves construction, or the transport of persons or hazardous materials, limits of coverage shall not be less than \$1,000,000 combined single limit.*

*Additional Insured. The General Liability and Property Damage coverages required for performance of this Agreement shall include the State of Vermont and its agencies, departments, officers and employees as Additional Insureds. If performance of this Agreement involves construction, or the transport of persons or hazardous materials, then the required Automotive Liability coverage shall include the State of Vermont and its agencies, departments, officers and employees as Additional Insureds. Coverage shall be primary and non-contributory with any other insurance and self-insurance.*

*Notice of Cancellation or Change. There shall be no cancellation, change, potential exhaustion of aggregate limits or non-renewal of insurance coverage(s) without thirty (30) days written prior written notice to the State.*