NORTHEAST DAIRY BUSINESS INNOVATION CENTER

New Dairy Processor Start-up Grant

2024 REQUEST FOR APPLICATIONS

The Northeast Dairy Business Innovation Center (NE-DBIC) announces the availability of funds through the New Dairy Processor Start-up Grant program to support new dairy processing projects throughout the Northeast. The goal of this program is to help develop competitive dairy processing businesses with long-term viability, supporting operations of all sizes in successfully launching and sustaining their products in the marketplace. This program is for:

1. Dairy farmers ready to begin processing,
2. Value-added entrepreneurs with proven experience in dairy processing and/or value-added business startups, including any relevant work experience, business ventures, products developed, and products brought to market, or
3. Dairy processors established after January 1, 2023, who are in the start-up[1] phase of business development.

Funds are intended to support start-up operations, focusing on tangible implementation rather than research and development, concept development, or initial planning. By the end of the grant period, projects should show their products being sold in stores or show a Letter of Commitment from a buyer, distributor, or retailer indicating plans to sell the products. Additionally, licenses must be obtained to sell dairy products across state lines. Therefore, applications should be at a stage where they are nearly ready for implementation and can provide Proof of Concept.

Applicants are required to allocate at least 15% of their funding towards obtaining technical assistance or training relevant to starting up value-added production. This may include business planning, recipe formulation, one-on-one training, workshops, or mentorship programs on dairy safety, business acceleration, food handling, and more.

[1]The **start-up stage** of a business is a company that is in the initial stages of its operations. Often initially funded by entrepreneurial founders, as they attempt to capitalize on developing a product or services for which they believe there is demand.

Funding from this grant program can also cover the purchase of specialized dairy processing equipment and supplies, enhancement of food safety measures, professional marketing and branding efforts, market access strategies, and product development.

Evidence of prior or current technical assistance from a service provider or business planner supporting the development of the project will make applications more competitive.

Grants are available to applicants in all Northeast states: Connecticut, Delaware, Maine, Maryland, Massachusetts, New Hampshire, New Jersey, New York, Pennsylvania, Rhode Island, and Vermont.

KEY DATES

RFA Release Date: July 9, 2024

Application Release Date: July 25, 2024

Application Deadline: September 5, 2024 at 2:00 PM ET

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Support is generally available during business hours: Monday–Friday, 7:45 AM to 4:30 PM ET. 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 (VAAFM) 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>. 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 (VAAFM), 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 $45.83 million to support projects in the Northeast region of the United States.

ELIGIBILITY SUMMARY

This grant is open to applicants from all Northeast states: Connecticut, Delaware, Maine, Maryland, Massachusetts, New Hampshire, New Jersey, New York, Pennsylvania, Rhode Island, and Vermont. Applicants must fall into one of the following categories:

1. Dairy farmer that:
    - Produces milk within the Northeast
    - Is a licensed dairy operation in compliance with all required state and federal standards
2. Value-added business entrepreneur that meets the following requirements:
    - Sources milk or dairy components from within the Northeast and has evidence of a committed partnership with a farm or processor for sourcing these components
    - Has a business entity prior to applying
    - Can demonstrate experience in dairy processing and/or related value-added business startup, including any relevant work experience, business ventures, products developed, and products brought to market
3. Dairy processor established after January 1, 2023 that:
    - Has a business entity and milk processing license prior to applying
    - Sources milk or dairy components from within the Northeast and has evidence of a committed partnership with a farm or processor for sourcing these components.
    - Is in the start-up phase of business operations

All applicants must also:

- Be headquartered or based in the Northeast
- Provide Proof of Concept demonstrating the viability of the business idea and product
- Have a plan for new value-added dairy processing that includes market research, financial projections, a branding and marketing strategy, and a facility location
- Obtain licenses to sell dairy products across state lines by the end of the grant period

- Launch their products in the marketplace or have a Letter of Commitment from a buyer, distributor, or retailer indicating plans to sell the product by the end of the grant period

NE-DBIC may confirm applicants' compliance with applicable licensing standards.

MINIMUM & MAXIMUM AWARD

Minimum: $15,000
Maximum: $75,000
Match: A 25% (cash or in-kind) match commitment is required

TOTAL AVAILABLE FUNDS

$500,000

GRANT FUND DISBURSEMENT

Grant funds will be distributed to grantees over three payments throughout the course of the grant project. Unless otherwise arranged with the grant program manager, the default payment structure of this grant is 40% of grant funds upfront, 40% of funds mid-project following an interim report, and 20% of funds once the grant is complete.

PROJECT LENGTH

Grant periods will range from 12 – 18 months, depending on the project. Pre-award costs may be available, with permission from the NE-DBIC Grant Coordinator.

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, AM21DBIVT1011-00.

FUNDING OPPORTUNITY DESCRIPTION

The NE-DBIC's New Dairy Processor Start-up Grant program aims to help develop competitive dairy processing businesses with long-term viability, supporting operations of all sizes in successfully launching and sustaining their products in the marketplace. This program is for:

1. Dairy farmers ready to begin processing,
2. Value-added entrepreneurs with proven experience in dairy processing and/or value-added business startups, or
3. Dairy processors established after January 1, 2023, who are in the start-up phase of business development.

Funds are intended to support start-up operations, focusing on tangible implementation rather than research and development, concept development, or initial planning. By the end of the grant period, projects should show their products being sold in stores or show a Letter of Commitment from a buyer, distributor, or retailer indicating plans to sell the products. Additionally, licenses must be obtained to sell dairy products across state lines. Therefore, applications should be at a stage where they are nearly ready for implementation and can provide Proof of Concept.

A Proof of Concept is a small-scale, preliminary study or demonstration used to determine the feasibility of an idea. By showcasing small-batch production, conducting market research, performing feasibility studies, and/or gathering expert validation, the Proof of Concept provides compelling evidence that the production venture is fundable and ready to implement.

Applicants are required to allocate at least 15% of their funding towards obtaining technical assistance or training relevant to starting up value-added production. This may include business planning, recipe formulation, one-on-one training, workshops or mentorship programs on dairy safety, business acceleration, food handling, and more.

Funding from this grant program can also cover the purchase of specialized dairy processing equipment and supplies, enhancement of food safety measures, professional marketing and branding efforts, market access strategies, and product development.

Successful applications will clearly outline the type of products to be produced, demonstrate thorough market research indicating the suitability and demand for their dairy products, and illustrate how their business fits within the current market landscape. Evidence of prior or current technical assistance from a service provider or business planner supporting the development of the project will make applications more competitive.

ELIGIBLE APPLICANTS

Applicants from any Northeast state can apply: Connecticut, Delaware, Maine, Maryland, Massachusetts, New Hampshire, New Jersey, New York, Pennsylvania, Rhode Island, and Vermont.

Applicants must be:

1. Dairy farmer that:
    - Produces milk within the Northeast
    - Is a licensed dairy operation in compliance with all required state and/federal standards
2. Value-added business entrepreneur that meets the following requirements:
    - Sources milk or dairy components from within the Northeast and has evidence of a committed partnership with a farm or processor for sourcing these components
    - Has a business entity prior to applying
    - Can demonstrate experience in dairy processing and/or related value-added business startup, including any relevant work experience, business ventures, products developed, and products brought to market
3. Dairy processor established after January 1, 2023 that:

- Has a business entity and milk processing license prior to applying
- Sources milk or dairy components from within the Northeast and has evidence of a committed partnership with a farm or processor for sourcing these components.
- Is in the start-up phase of business operations

All applicants must also:

- Be headquartered or based in the Northeast
- Provide Proof of Concept demonstrating the viability of the business idea and product
- Have a plan for new value-added dairy processing that includes market research, financial projections, a branding and marketing strategy, and a facility location
- Obtain licenses to sell dairy products across state lines by the end of the grant period
- Launch their products in the marketplace or have a Letter of Commitment from a buyer, distributor, or retailer indicating plans to sell the product by the end of the grant period

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

1. Certificate of Insurance listing the VAAFM as an additional insured
2. Current IRS Form W-9
3. Unique Entity Identifier (UEI) acquired via SAM.gov. UEIs are federally-issued business identifiers replacing the DUNS system and are free to acquire. Applicants who do not already have a UEI are strongly encouraged to start this process during the application period to ensure a timely start to their grant, if awarded.

ELIGIBLE PROJECTS

Projects under this grant will support dairy businesses of all sizes in starting up competitive value-added dairy processing operations with long-term viability, launching and sustaining their products in the marketplace. By the end of the grant term, products must be in production and either available in stores or showing a Letter of Commitment from a buyer, distributor, or retailer indicating plans to sell the product. Additionally, all necessary licenses must be obtained to sell dairy products across state lines.

For dairy farmers, this grant will help diversify their businesses into value-added processing. Value-added entrepreneurs will receive support to establish processing businesses with long-term viability. Dairy processor applicants must be those established after January 1, 2023, and still in the start-up phase of operations. Successful applications will clearly outline the types of products to be produced, demonstrate thorough market research indicating demand and market suitability, and describe how their products fit within the current market landscape. Value-added entrepreneur and dairy processor applicants will be required to demonstrate a partnership with a farm or processor for milk supply or dairy components.

SECTION I. PROGRAM OVERVIEW

All projects must allocate at least 15% of their grant funds toward obtaining technical assistance or training. Projects that engage with relevant technical assistance prior to applying will be prioritized. Technical assistance may include business planning, recipe formulation, one-on-one training, workshops or mentorship programs on dairy safety, business acceleration, food handling, and more.

FUNDING PRIORITIES

In addition to meeting eligibility, above, project approaches should address at least two (2) of the following funding priority areas:

- Developing unique and innovative dairy products that cater to consumer trends and preferences
- Increasing the value of milk for farmers
- Increasing sales, revenue, and/or consumers reached
- Increasing consumer access to goat, sheep, and/or mixed milk products
- Developing new partnerships across the dairy supply chain
- Providing training and workforce development opportunities for employees to enhance their dairy processing skills
- Implementing environmentally sustainable practices in their processing operations, such as waste reduction, energy efficiency, and eco-friendly packaging solutions

REQUIRED PROJECT CRITERIA

All projects should be scaled appropriately to meet the long-term viability needs of the applicant's business.

Effective applications will demonstrate:

1. A realistic Proof of Concept indicating their processing venture is fundable, ready to implement, and will result in unique dairy products entering the marketplace, including:
    a. A detailed description of the dairy products to be produced, including milk or milk component source, product types, specifications, how they align with current consumer trends, and suitability for their business
    b. Comprehensive market research indicating demand for the proposed products, target markets, and the suitability and potential success of the products in the current market landscape
    c. How the project will significantly impact their business, increasing long-term viability, revenue, and market presence
    d. What makes the products unique
    e. Potential risks and challenges and strategies to mitigate them
    f. Identification of labor and expertise needed
2. How the project will impact businesses upstream or downstream in the supply chain and/or the wider Northeast dairy processing sector
3. A robust plan for moving raw and finished products through the supply chain, including logistics, distribution channels, and marketing/sales strategies

4. Evidence that the project is currently nearly ready for implementation with an actionable plan for achieving required results by the end of the grant

By the end of the project, all awardees must achieve the following:

- Transform raw milk or dairy components into an edible product meant for human consumption
- Obtain the necessary licenses to sell their dairy products across state lines
- Evidence of products in the market or a Letter of Commitment from a buyer, distributor, or retailer indicating plans to sell the product
- Be headquartered or based in the Northeast
- Source or produce milk or dairy components from within the Northeast
- Manufacture their products within the Northeast

ALLOWABLE COSTS

1. **REQUIRED**: At least 15% of grant funds for the project must be used to work with a technical service provider or to attend training courses relevant to starting up value-added production. This may include but is not limited to:
    - One-on-one services for business planning, recipe formulation, processing best practices, and food safety plan development
    - Trainings, workshops, mentorship programs, and certifications in areas such as:
        - Milk and dairy product quality and safety
        - Food business acceleration
        - Dairy product production
        - Recipe or process improvement
        - Food handling
        - Microbiology
    - Partnerships with academic institutions or research centers that offer access to specialized facilities and equipment.

2. **OPTIONAL:** Applicant may allocate funds toward processing-specific activities in the following budget categories:
    - **Specialized equipment** (purchases of $5,000 or more) or supplies in the following pre-approved list. Seek approval ahead of applying for something not on this list:
        - Milk storage tanks, including bulk tanks and milk silos
        - Milk pipelines
        - Fluid milk bottling equipment
        - Pasteurizers and/or homogenizers
        - Separators
        - Packaging equipment:
            - Fillers
            - Vacuum sealers
            - Label machines
        - Specialty manufacturing equipment:

- Cheese vats, drain tables, wax tanks, brine tanks, molds, presses
- Curd mills
- Shredders, slicers, or cutters
- Prefabricated, specialized units for aging or processing of dairy (no construction)
- Ice cream making equipment

- Industrial cooling and/or humidity control for specialized use:
  - Commercial freezers, refrigerators, and coolers
  - Cheese aging environmental controls
  - Upgraded glycol chillers
- Plant modernization:
  - Electric yard horses
  - Clean in place (CIP) wash systems
  - Foam floor sprays for transition areas
  - Systems for water reclamation
  - Clean out of place (COP) wash tanks

- **Supplies** (Purchases costing less than $5,000 per unit):
  - E.g., hot water heater (tank style or on-demand), water filtration, milk pipeline, milk pump, sinks, refrigeration, dishwasher
- **Training** on the use of new equipment
- Professional marketing and branding **contractor/consultant**:
  - Development of a marketing plan which may include market research, strategy and tactics, message development, market positioning, media, and/or paid advertising plan.
  - Branding, Creative, and/or Design Services
  - Digital Marketing and Web Development
- **Personnel** and **fringe**
- **Travel** to source or pick up equipment
- **Other**: shipping costs, rental of general use equipment (not for construction)

Project costs that are not allowable for grant funds should be included in Match funds.

EXAMPLES: ELIGIBLE PROJECTS

1. *A farmer wants to begin making yogurt. They have sought technical assistance with business planning and market analysis. They apply to purchase a vat pasteurizer and to work with a dairy consultant to refine their current yogurt recipe and develop a food safety plan. Applicant shows that they have a plan for reaching out to distribution channels and will be able to get their products into the market by the end of the grant term.*
2. *A value-added business entrepreneur wants to begin making sheep milk cheeses. They identify a strong demand for sheep milk products in specialty cheese shops. They have participated in a training course on sheep milk processing and have partnered with a sheep farm for milk supply.*

They apply for funding for a bulk tank, cheese moulds, packaging, and ongoing technical training on cheese aging and food safety. By the end of the project, they have Letters of Commitment from buyers from specialty retailers and Interstate Milk Shipping certification.

3. *A farmer wants to diversify into bottling their own pasteurized milk. They have demonstrated a demand for milk in their community and have worked with a business planner to understand what it will take to add processing into their operation. They apply for funds to purchase a bottling line and pasteurizer and to work with a food safety consultant to receive appropriate certifications and licensure to begin selling milk across state lines. They have a clear plan to bottle and market their milk.*

INELIGIBLE PROJECTS

- Projects not primarily located within the Northeast
- Projects that are beyond the start-up stage of business development
- Projects that support the farm-side of milk storage or handling
- Projects that solely support the production/sales of raw fluid milk meant for human consumption without pasteurization
- Projects that will not result in products entering the marketplace
- Projects that do not primarily support the applicant's use of regionally sourced raw fluid milk, milk components, or dairy mix
- Projects that use grant funds for:
    - Construction
    - Purchase or lease-to-own of land/building/facilities
    - Purchase of general equipment (approved specialized equipment is allowable)
    - Purchase of vehicles
    - Unallowable costs/activities as outlined in the 2021 – 2022 AMS Terms and Conditions (8.0 Allowable Costs and Activities).
- Costs incurred outside of the grant period cannot be covered by grant funds or count toward match. If a project is selected to be awarded, the recipient may request pre-award costs to be approved for expenditures that start no earlier than the date that an awarded applicant is notified of the award.
-

EXAMPLES: INELIGIBLE PROJECTS

1. *A farmer wants to start producing a line of ice cream in partnership with a co-packing processor.*
    a. *Why is this ineligible? This grant is only available to dairy farm applicants or value-added business entrepreneurs looking to start up value-added dairy processing themselves. There are other NE-DBIC programs more appropriate to starting up co-packing endeavors.*
2. *A farmer wants to start producing aged cheeses. They need an aging space and apply to build a cheese aging cave that will allow them to purchase more milk from local farmers.*
    a. *Why is this ineligible? Construction costs are not covered by this grant. The farmer could apply to use grant funds for specialized equipment such as temperature control to make*

a space usable for aging but must find another source for construction costs. In addition, they must spend at least 15% of their grant funds on technical assistance to make this eligible.

3. *A value-added business entrepreneur wishes to conduct research into market gaps to help them develop a new cultured dairy product.*
    a. *Why is this ineligible? This grant is intended to support start-up operations, focusing on tangible implantation rather than concept development or initial planning. By the end of the grant period, projects should show their products being sold in stores or show a commitment from a buyer, distributor, or retailer indicating plans to sell the product. Other grants are a better fit for research and development activities. If the processor had already developed and tested the product and were at the stage of scaling up its production, they could apply for grant funds for specialized equipment they need for production or packaging.*

APPLICATION REQUIREMENTS

PROJECT WORKPLAN

All applicants are required to provide a detailed list of all major activities that will take place during their project and the associated deliverables and timeframes for each. All project workplans must include working with a Technical Assistance provider, achieving Interstate Milk Shipping (IMS) Certification, and either launching products in the marketplace or receiving a Letter of Commitment indicating plans to sell the product into their project workplan.

Sample Project Workplan

Description of key activity	Description of associated deliverables	Estimated timeframe
Purchase New Vat Pasteurizer	• Proof of full payment made on equipment	October 1 – November 30, 2024
Install New Vat Pasteurizer	• Photos and/or other documentation that shows the full process of installing the new equipment, and evidence that it is fully operational.	January 1 – February 28, 2025
Food Safety Training	• Contract with food safety consultant to develop food safety plan • Evidence of completed food safety plan	March 1 – May 31, 2025
Packaging Designed	• Documentation showing cheese packaging with compliant labeling • Proof of contractor payment	May 1 – July 31, 2025
First Production Run	• Photos or other documentation showing first cheese production runs • Photos or other documentation showing cheese packaged and ready for retail	July 1 – September 30, 2025
Food Safety Inspection	• Proof of Interstate Milk Shipping Certification	September 1 – November 30, 2025

Product Launched into Market	• Letter of Commitment from retailer indicating plan to purchase products	December 1 – December 31, 2025
Grant and match funds fully expended	• Proof of receipt for payment on specialized equipment and installation, supplies, and personnel time	December 31, 2025

PROJECT BUDGET

At least 15% of all requested grant funds must be used for technical assistance or training during the grant. Please refer to the Allowable Costs section above for a list of technical assistance activities. The remainder of the funds may be used for other costs, including engaging in professional marketing and branding services, purchase of supplies, purchase of specialized equipment, etc. The full list of pre-approved equipment and supplies is also located in the Allowable Costs section. Grant funds requested must align with the allowable costs detailed in the 2021 – 2022 AMS Terms and Conditions. Expenses incurred before the grant period are not eligible for grant funds or match funds.

Quotes are required for any requested funds for specialized equipment and installation services to be covered by grant funds.

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 $75,000, the applicant must demonstrate at least $18,750 in match. Matching funds may be contributed by the applicant or by another organization. Applicants can use other funds (state grant or loan, other non-Federal money) as a match to this project only if there is not any such restriction in the agreements for those funds. The 25% required match may be any combination of cash and in-kind funds in any expense category, and may cover costs ineligible for grant funds, such as construction. Match funds must be expended within the grant period.

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

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 that shows at least 25% matching funds for a $75,000 grant request with 15% of funds paying for technical assistance and/or training:

Expense Category	Grant Funds Requested	Applicant Contribution - Cash Match	Applicant Contribution - In-kind Match	Project Total
Specialized Equipment	$60,000.00	$12,000.00	$0.00	$72,000.00
Personnel	$0.00	$1,500.00	$0.00	$1,500.00
Fringe	$0.00	$0.00	$0.00	$0.00
Training	$5,000.00	$0.00	$0.00	$5,000.00
Contractual/Consultant	$6,250.00	$0.00	$0.00	$6,250.00
Supplies	$3,750.00	$5,250.00	$0.00	$9,000.00
Travel	$0.00	$0.00	$0.00	$0.00
Other	$0.00	$0.00	$0.00	$0.00
TOTALS	**$75,000.00**	**$18,750.00**	**$0.00**	**$93,750.00**

PROJECT PARTNERS

Project partners should be identified at the time of application and submit a Letter of Commitment. Partners include any entities outside the applicant's business that are key participants in the project. The following entities would be considered partners:

- Technical assistance (TA) providers offering ongoing support throughout the life of the grant project. This can include TA providers such as business planners, agricultural extensions, and other business viability services
- Farmers or processors committed to partnering with applicants to supply milk or dairy components for value-added production
- Investors of new processing startups

Contractors or equipment dealers/installers do not need to be included as project partners if they are providing services included in their normal course of business.

LETTERS OF SUPPORT/COMMITMENT

At least two Letters of Commitment and/or Support are required for this application. Additional letters may be required, as outlined below. Additional letters beyond what is required may 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.

- Project partners are **required** to submit a Letter of Commitment
- If you have match contributors from outside your business, you are **required** to submit a Letter of Commitment from each. Match contributors, such as lenders, should provide a letter that describes their contributions and assigns value to their match commitment (including financial or in-kind support)

- Letters of Commitment are **required** to be submitted from any milk or ingredients supplier, co-packer, or retailer/distributor, that is named in the application. For example, if a value-added business entrepreneur is buying milk from a cooperative, the cooperative must verify that the milk is available for this project

Letters of Support should explain support from businesses or organizations that are connected but not directly engaged in project work. This could include but is not limited to farmers, milk haulers, retailers, distributors, or customers. Letters of Support should describe the benefits of the project both for the applicant business and the greater dairy sector, supply chain, or community at large.

Letters from equipment dealers and installers are not required and will not count towards the required two Letters of Commitment or Support.

It is strongly encouraged that all letters be written on the writer's letterhead, include their signature, and be submitted as .pdf documents.

SUPPORTING DOCUMENTATION

The applicant should include any additional information that shows the impacts of this grant such as impact on business viability, market research, quotes for work included in the proposed activities, evidence of marketplace demand that the project will address, recipe development, TA services received in the development of this project, business plans, or other documentation that provides further context for your proposed project.

Bids or quotes are required for all specialized equipment purchases and installation services that will be covered by grant funds.

HOW TO APPLY

All applications must be submitted via the WebGrants system at agriculturegrants.vermont.gov. No paper applications will be accepted. Applications will be accepted from July 25 to September 5, 2024 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.

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

Applications will each be reviewed by a multi-state NE-DBIC advisory committee comprised of representatives from Northeast state agriculture agencies/departments, agriculture extension agencies, and dairy sector stakeholders. Three reviewers will be assigned to score each application. Funding decisions are made according to scoring, reviewer comments, past grant performance, and with

consideration to diversity across geography, herd type (as applicable), size of operation, and impacts beyond the grantee.

See Section III: Scoring Criteria.

AWARD INFORMATION

All applicants will be notified of the NE-DBIC decision of whether to award funds to their project.

KEY DATES

DATES MAY BE SUBJECT TO CHANGE

July 9, 2024	Request for Application (RFA) released
July 25, 2024	Application period opens
September 5, 2024 at 2:00 PM ET	Application closes
October 2024	Applicants notified of award status
December 2024	Estimated grant start date
May 2025, date may depend on project	Interim report due
December 2025- June 2026	Project end date
30 days after project end date	Final report due

II. FULL APPLICATION

The 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., LLC, sole proprietor, etc.), primary contact information
- [Optional] demographic information

Applicant Eligibility

- Are you a dairy farmer? If yes:
  - Do you produce milk within the Northeast?
  - Are you a licensed dairy operation in compliance with all required state and federal standards?
  - What is your herd/flock size and species? [400-character limit]
  - Describe your business/organization in terms of size (gross sales, number of employees, production volume), number of years in business, and markets. [4000-character limit]
- Are you a value-added business entrepreneur? If yes:
  - Explain your planned sourcing of milk or dairy components produced in the Northeast and describe your progress toward establishing a committed partnership with a farm or processor in that region. [3000-character limit]
  - Upload current proof of existing business entity. *Examples include business license, articles of incorporation or organization, Employer Identification Number, or DBA registration.*
  - Describe your experience in dairy processing and/or value-added business start-ups, including any relevant work experience, business ventures, products developed, products brought to market, and the current status of those initiatives. [4000-character limit]
- Are you a licensed dairy processing business established after January 1, 2023?
  - Explain your planned sourcing of milk or dairy components produced in the Northeast, and describe your progress toward establishing a committed partnership with a farm or processor in that region. [4000-character limit]
  - Are you in the start-up phase of business operation? *For the definition of the start-up stage of a business, please refer to the RFA.*
  - Describe your business/organization in terms of size (gross sales, number of employees, production volume), scope, markets, and amount of time in business. [4000-character limit]

- Is the applicant headquartered or based in a Northeast state (Connecticut, Delaware, Maine, Maryland, Massachusetts, New Hampshire, New Jersey, New York, Pennsylvania, Rhode Island, or Vermont)?
- Describe your business/organization's strategy or approach to sustainable business growth and positioning. What is your long-term vision? [3000-character limit]
- I understand that if awarded, I must obtain the necessary licenses to sell dairy products across state lines by the end of the grant period. [yes/no]
- I understand that if awarded, I must launch my products in the marketplace by the end of the grant period or have a Letter of Commitment from a buyer, distributor, or retailer indicating plans to sell the product. [yes/no]

Entity History

- Has your business/organization received any federal or state grant in the past 5 years? If yes:
    - List the grants received and briefly describe the topic areas of the grant(s). [1000-character limit]
- 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 and describe the work done under the grant(s). [1000-character limit]
    - How will the work in this grant differ from and/or build upon that work? [2000-character limit]
- Have you received, or do you plan to apply for, other grant(s) in conjunction with this grant? *Leveraging other funds to complete this project is encouraged.* If yes:
    - Please list the other grants you will apply for/have applied for in conjunction with this grant. [1000-character limit]
- Will you be using loans to supplement this application? If yes:
    - Please list the loans you will apply for/have applied for in conjunction with this grant. [1000-character limit]
- Has your business ever been unable to complete or adhere to granting requirements for a grant you were awarded? If yes:
    - Describe the circumstances that prevented you from completing/adhering to the requirements of your grant(s). [2000-character limit]
- Describe why you and your staff are qualified to complete this project, as proposed. [1000-character limit]
- Rate your business's experience in implementing similar past work/projects related to milk storage or handling improvements. *(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 so, enter their name and organization. [1000-character limit]

- Have you received technical assistance in the preparation of this project? *Technical assistance includes marketing professionals, business planners, agricultural extension, and other business viability services.* If yes:
    - List name/organization that provided relevant technical assistance. [2000-character limit]
    - Describe the role of the technical assistance provider(s) in the development of this project. [2000-character limit]

PROJECT DESCRIPTION

Proof of Concept

This section is meant to provide compelling evidence that your processing venture is fundable, ready to implement, and will result in unique dairy products entering the marketplace.

- What product(s) have you chosen to bring to market with this processing venture? Provide a detailed description about how they align with current consumer trends. Explain their suitability for your business and how they differ from existing products. [5000-character limit]
- Describe how you determined that there is an unmet market need for these products, summarizing your market research and identifying your target market. [5000-character limit]
- Identify the source of your milk or dairy components and any other raw ingredients and explain how you know there will be a consistent supply. [3000-character limit]
- What potential risks and challenges do you foresee with your value-added processing venture, and what strategies will you use to mitigate them? [4000-character limit]
- How much labor will be required for processing? Describe what expertise will be needed and how you plan to find this labor. [3000-character limit]
- Please describe your plan for value-added dairy processing including financial projections, costs of production, and the planned processing location. Provide specific information on how these factors demonstrate the financial and logistical feasibility of your venture. [4000-character limit]
- Describe the regulatory requirements for your processing venture. How do you plan to ensure compliance with local, state, and federal regulations? [3000-character limit]
- Outline the marketing strategies you will use to expand sales of your products. [4000-character limit]
- Why is now a good time for your business to make these investments? What would be the impacts of not receiving this funding? [3000-character limit]

Project Plan

This section is meant to provide a comprehensive overview of your proposed grant project.

- Summarize your proposed grant project in a couple of sentences. [2000-character limit]
- Provide a detailed project description which comprehensively describes your grant project. Describe 1) the issues you plan to address and why they are relevant and important, 2) goals

and expected outcomes for the project and how they will be achieved, 3) an outline of activities you would like to include, 4) the role of any partnerships. Include any background or added context, as needed. [5000-character limit]

- What stage do you expect your value-added start-up to be at by the end of the 12–18-month grant period? [4000-character limit]
- What type of technical assistance will you receive over the course of your project? Describe the role of the TA provider(s) over the course of the grant and what you will achieve by working with them. *Technical assistance includes marketing professionals, business planners, agricultural extension, and other business viability services. At least 15% of grant funds must go toward TA.* [4000-character limit]
- Identify 2 or more Funding Priorities, as defined in the RFA, that your project addresses and provide an explanation of how your project aligns. *Please list the funding priority (as written in the RFA) that you are addressing, followed by your explanation.* [4000-character limit]

Project Impacts

- Describe both the positive and negative impacts of this project on your workforce [5000-character limit]
- What long-term impacts do you anticipate on your business? [5000-character limit]
- What will success look like for this project? [2000-character limit]
- Describe any metrics for success you anticipate on this project, including what you will measure and how you will track them. [2000-character limit]
- How do you plan to sustain the activities implemented through this project beyond the grant period? [4000-character limit]
- Estimate the number of dairy farmers/processors that will benefit from this project.
- Estimate the number of **non-dairy** businesses/organizations that will benefit from this project.
- What is the percent increase in sales that you anticipate from these grant activities for your business? *E.g. If your sales were $50,000 before & $60,000 after: ($60,000-$50,000)/$50,000 x 100 = 20%)*
- How many new or existing outlets do you expect consumers to use to buy your business's dairy products for each of the categories below? If not applicable to your business/organization, enter zero (0).
    - Number of farmers markets
    - Number of grocery stores
    - Number of wholesale markets
    - Other outlets
    - If other outlets, please list
- As a result of this grant, do you expect an increase in revenue for your business/organization? If yes:
    - Please estimate the increase in revenue (in $)
- How many jobs are expected to be maintained because of this grant project?
- How many jobs are expected to be created because of this grant project?

PROJECT WORKPLAN

Provide a detailed list of all major activities that will take place during this project and their associated deliverables and timeframes. All applicants are required to include working with a Technical Assistance provider, achieving Interstate Milk Shipping (IMS) Certification, and either launching products in the marketplace or receiving a Letter of Commitment indicating plans to sell the product into this project workplan.

Include at least 5 key project activities.

- Detailed description of the activity [2000-character limit]
- Description of the deliverables you will be able to show in your reporting to demonstrate this activity has been successful [2000-character limit]
- Estimated timeframe and/or date of completion of the key activity [2000-character limit]

Example Project Workplan

Description of key activity	Description of associated deliverables	Estimated timeframe
Purchase New Vat Pasteurizer	• Proof of full payment made on equipment	October 1 – November 30, 2024
Install New Vat Pasteurizer	• Photos and/or other documentation that shows the full process of installing the new equipment, and evidence that it is fully operational.	January 1 – February 28, 2025
Food Safety Training	• Contract with food safety consultant to develop food safety plan • Evidence of completed food safety plan	March 1 – May 31, 2025
Packaging Designed	• Documentation showing cheese packaging with compliant labeling • Proof of contractor payment	May 1 – July 31, 2025
First Production Run	• Photos or other documentation showing first cheese production runs • Photos or other documentation showing cheese packaged and ready for retail	July 1 – September 30, 2025
Food Safety Inspection	• Proof of Interstate Milk Shipping Certification	September 1 – November 30, 2025
Product Launched into Market	• Letter of Commitment from retailer indicating plan to purchase products	December 1 – December 31, 2025
Grant and match funds fully expended	• Proof of receipt for payment on specialized equipment and installation, supplies, and personnel time	December 31, 2025

BUDGET

Please complete the following budget table, listing all grant requests and match contributions. Totals will appear once the grid has been saved.

Allowable Costs: Grant funds requested must align with the allowable costs detailed in the 2021 – 2022 AMS Terms and Conditions (see 8.0 Allowable Costs and Activities).

Match contributions: All projects must demonstrate matching funds of at least 25% of the grant request to go toward the grant project. For instance, for a grant request of $40,000, the applicant must demonstrate at least $10,000 in match.

- 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 $7,000 in supplies and $30,000 in personnel could be matched with $10,000 of equipment.)
- Must take place during the grant period.

Refer to the Project Budget section above for more details, including match and budget examples.

Budget Table (example)

Expense Category	Grant Funds Requested	Applicant Contribution - Cash Match	Applicant Contribution - In-kind Match	Project Total
Specialized Equipment	$60,000.00	$12,000.00	$0.00	$72,000.00
Personnel	$0.00	$1,500.00	$0.00	$1,500.00
Fringe	$0.00	$0.00	$0.00	$0.00
Training	$5,000.00	$0.00	$0.00	$5,000.00
Contractual/Consultant	$6,250.00	$0.00	$0.00	$6,250.00
Supplies	$3,750.00	$5,250.00	$0.00	$9,000.00
Travel	$0.00	$0.00	$0.00	$0.00
Other	$0.00	$0.00	$0.00	$0.00
TOTALS	**$75,000.00**	**$18,750.00**	**$0.00**	**$93,750.00**

BUDGET NARRATIVE

The budget narrative should reflect what you have outlined in your budget table. Grant funds requested must align with the allowable costs/activities as outlined in the 2021 – 2022 AMS Terms and Conditions (8.0 Allowable Costs and Activities). Please ensure that values associated with the following questions align with your budget table.

- Total funds requested for this grant. *Must be between $15,000 and $75,000.*
- Amount of matching funds. *Projects must demonstrate at least 25% cash/in-kind match.*
- List 1) each 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. *Note that all*

outside match contributors also need to provide a Letter of Commitment for their match. [3000-character limit]

- Are all matching funds/contributions committed at this time? If not:
    - Provide the sources that are uncommitted and timeline/plan for securing these commitments. [2000-character limit]

*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 'Equipment' expenses included in the 'Grant Funds Requested' column of your above budget? If yes:
    - Equipment: List each piece of equipment (with description if needed) and for each, indicate: 1) grant funds requested per piece, and 2) justification for how this equipment is necessary for the success of this project. *Includes rental equipment or purchase of specialized equipment needed for grant activities.* [3000-character limit]
- Are 'Personnel' expenses included in the 'Grant Request' column of your above budget? If yes:
    - 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. [3000-character limit]
- Are 'Fringe Benefit' expenses included in the 'Grant Request' column of your budget? If yes:
    - Fringe Benefits: for each of the project's salaried employees, provide the 1) fringe benefit rate and 2) grant funds requested. [3000-character limit]
- Are 'Training' expenses included in the 'Grant Request' 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. [3000-character limit]
- Are 'Contractual/Consultant' expenses included in the 'Grant Funds Requested' column of your above budget? *Note that multiple bids may be required. Refer to Allowable Costs in the AMS Terms and Conditions.* If yes:
    - Contractual/Consultant: List each anticipated contractor/consultant service. For each, provide: 1) grant funds requested, 2) detailed description of services, and 3) justification for why the services are necessary for the success of this project. [3000-character limit]
- Are 'Supply' expenses included in the 'Grant Request' column of your above budget? *Supplies include materials, supplies, and fabricated parts costing less than $5,000 per unit.* If yes:
    - 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. [3000-character limit]
- Are 'Travel' expenses included in the 'Grant Request' column of your above budget? *Travel costs must not exceed Federal GSA rates. Refer to Allowable Costs in the RFA.*
    - 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. [3000-character limit]

- Are 'Other' expenses included in the 'Grant Request' column of your budget*? E.g. rental expenses, shipping.* 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. [3000-character limit]

Anticipated Project Income

Any program income generated during the grant period must be used to further the objectives of the grant project. Program income includes, but is not limited to: income from fees for services performed; the sale of commodities or items fabricated under an award (this includes items sold at cost if the cost of producing the item was funded in whole or partially with grant funds); and registration fees for conferences, workshops, events, etc.

Recipients are not required to report program income earned after the grant period.

- Do you anticipate having any program income? If yes:
    - List any anticipated sources of income generated by the activities covered by this grant. [1000-character limit]
    - How much income is expected to be earned by those activities (in $)?
    - Describe how you will reinvest the program income into the project to enhance the education, promotion, or consumption of Northeast-regionally produced dairy products. [2000-character limit]

SUPPORTING INFORMATION

Project Partners

If your project includes project partners, they should be identified at the time of application and submit a Letter of Commitment. Partners include any entities outside the applicant's business that are key participants in the project. The following entities would be considered partners:

- Technical assistance (TA) providers offering ongoing support throughout the life of the grant project. This can include TA providers such as business planners, agricultural extensions, and other business viability services.
- Farmers or processors committed to partnering with applicants to supply milk or dairy components for value-added production.
- Investors of new processing start-ups.

Contractors or equipment dealers/installers do not need to be included as project partners if they are providing services included in their normal course of business.

Enter project partners into the grid provided. For each partner, include:

- Partner name
- Title

- Business/Organization
- Description of role [500-character limit]
- Have they committed to partnering?

Letters of Commitment and Support

At least two Letters of Commitment or Support are required for this application. Additional letters may be required, as outlined below. Additional letters beyond what is required may 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, such as lenders, should provide a letter that describes their contributions and assigns value to their match commitment (including financial or in-kind support).

- Project partners are required to submit a Letter of Commitment.
- If you have match contributors from outside your business, you are **required** to submit a Letter of Commitment from each.
- Letters of Commitment are **required** to be submitted from any milk or ingredients supplier, co-packer, or retailer/distributor, that is named in the application. For example, if a processor will buy increased volumes of milk from a cooperative, the cooperative must verify that the additional milk is available for this project.

Letters of Support should explain support from businesses or organizations that are connected but not directly engaged in project work. This could include but is not limited to farmers, milk haulers, retailers, distributors, or customers. Letters of Support should describe the benefits of the project both for the applicant business and the greater dairy sector, supply chain, or community at large.

Letters from equipment dealers and installers are not required and will not count towards the required two Letters of Commitment or Support.

It is strongly encouraged that all letters be written on the writer’s letterhead, include their signature, and be submitted as .pdf documents.

Supporting Documentation

The applicant should include any additional information that shows the impacts of this grant such as impact on business viability, market research, quotes for work included in the proposed activities, evidence of marketplace demand that the project will address, recipe development, TA services received in the development of this project, business plans, or other documentation that provides further context for your proposed project.

Bids or quotes are required for all specialized equipment purchases and installation services that will be covered by grant funds.

III. SCORING CRITERIA

REVIEWER SCORING CRITERIA

Project Proposal (80 points)

Applicant effectively demonstrates Proof of Concept including thorough market research and that the project will result in a product that is available in the market by the end of the grant period.	20 points
Project overview illustrates an impactful and realistic project that will create long-term benefits for business viability.	15 points
Applicant demonstrates that their project is well-aligned with funding priorities and provides details to support that.	10 points
Applicant provides clear and relevant reasoning for timely need for funding.	5 points
Applicant provides a well-conceived workplan to complete the project within the grant period. Project includes realistic expectations on expected successes, challenges, and a plan to sustain activities beyond the life of the grant.	15 points
Application includes all required Letters of Commitment and/or Support that show the project is impactful, feasible, and has the support needed to achieve success.	10 points
Application effectively demonstrates project will provide significant additional benefits for farmers, workforce, consumers, or supply-chain resiliency.	5 points

Budget (20 points)

Budget and budget narrative are realistic and sufficient to accomplish the work proposed. Budget narrative aligns with the budget table and includes enough detail to support the funding request amount.	10 points
Application includes quotes for any equipment purchases and installation services included in the grant budget.	5 points
Applicant has leveraged the required percentage of match contribution and provides high-level details on match sources.	5 points

IV. 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 (VAAFM) indicating their intent to complete the proposed project and authorizing NE-DBIC/VAAFM 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 (12/07/2023 Revised).

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

1. 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.]
2. A current IRS Form W-9 (Request for Taxpayer Identification Number and Certification), signed within the past six months
3. A Unique Entity Identifier (UEI) number, acquired through SAM.gov
4. Documentation verifying pledged matching funds, as applicable.

GRANTEE PAYMENT SCHEDULE

Unless other arrangements are made with the grant manager, payments will be made on the following schedule:

- **Initial payment: 40%** of the total grant will be paid to the grantee upon receipt of certificate of insurance and Form W-9, confirmation of Unique Entity Identifier (UEI) via SAM.gov, and a 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: 40%** of the total grant will be issued upon approval of grantee's 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

The following reporting is required under this grant program:

1. Grantees will submit an Interim Performance Report mid-project that may include but is not limited to:
    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. The final report may include but is not limited to:
    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 grant and match expenditures
    h. Project outcomes:
        i. Results of grantee's measures of success
        ii. Number of project beneficiaries reached
        iii. Number of project beneficiaries that are dairy businesses (buy, sell, aggregate, store, produce or distribute dairy products)
            1. Of these, how many project beneficiaries gained knowledge on how to access or produce dairy products?
        iv. Number of jobs maintained because of this grant project
        v. Number of jobs created because of this grant project
        vi. Number of dairy businesses (including Grantee's) that, due to this grant project:
            1. Gained knowledge about dairy product development or dairy business improvement methods
            2. Implemented new or modified dairy processes or production methods
            3. Expanded existing product lines
                a. If so, how many product lines were improved?
            4. Developed new dairy product lines
                a. If so, how many product categories were created?
            5. Improved existing dairy product lines
                a. If so, how many product categories were improved?
            6. Increased their annual sales?

a. If so, what was the annual value of sales before the project?
b. What were the annual sales after the project?

7. Implemented new marketing approaches through this project

vii. Number of existing sales outlets in each of the following categories that expanded their dairy product offerings either by volume or expanded product category, as a result of this project: farmers markets, grocery stores, wholesale markets/buyers, restaurants, retailers, distributors, food hubs, school food programs, other (specify)

viii. Number of new sales outlets in each of the following categories that expanded their dairy product offerings either by volume or expanded product category, as a result of this project: farmers markets, grocery stores, wholesale markets/buyers, restaurants, retailers, distributors, food hubs, school food programs, other (specify)

ix. Number of new partnerships established between dairy businesses and supply chain businesses as a result of this project

1. If so, how many of these new partnerships resulted in expanded or improved local/regional dairy infrastructure?
2. How many of these new partnerships resulted in purchasing contracts?
3. How many of these new partnerships resulted in higher profits?
4. How many of these new partnerships resulted in improved marketing channels?
5. How many of these new partnerships resulted in an increase in the volume of Northeast regional milk that entered the supply chain?
6. How many of these new partnerships included a dairy cooperative?
7. Of the new partnerships established through this project, how many businesses improved their dairy processing capacity or systems?

x. If Grantee is a dairy business, rate the level of satisfaction/outlook for the future of your dairy business before and after the grant

xi. If Grantee is a farmer, which of the following did they experience?

1. Reduced cost of production
2. Increased lifestyle satisfaction
3. Improved water quality
4. Increased soil health

i. If Grantee purchased special purpose equipment with grant funds, that has a current market value of $5,000.00 or more, they must complete the following Federal forms with their final report:

i. Tangible Personal Property Report
ii. Supplemental Sheet

j. Reporting on any program income generated by the grant activities and description of how income generated is rolled back into the purpose of the grant

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 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 Vermont State Insurance Specifications (11/01/2023 revised) to prospective insurers for accuracy.

A summary of the requirements is below:

1. General Liability and Property Damage: with respect to all operations performed under the Agreement, the Party shall carry general liability insurance having all major divisions of coverage including, but not limited to:
    a. Premises – Operations
    b. Products and Completed Operations
    c. Personal Injury Liability
    d. Contractual Liability
    e. The policy shall be on an occurrence form and limits shall not be less than:
        i. $1,000,000 Each Occurrence
        ii. $2,000,000 General Aggregate
        iii. $1,000,000 Products/Completed Operations Aggregate
        iv. $1,000,000 Personal & Advertising Injury
2. Automotive Liability: if motor vehicles will be or are used in connection with the Agreement, 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. For Contracts involving construction or when performance under the Contract would require a commercial or other specialized driver's license, limits shall not be less than $1,000,000. When performance includes interstate commerce or transport of hazardous products or materials regulated by the Federal Motor Carrier Administration and set forth in 49 C.F.R. § 387.9, the coverage shall include the MCS-90 endorsement.
3. Additional Insured:
    a. The General Liability, Property Damage, and Umbrella/Excess coverages required for performance of the Agreement shall include the State of Vermont and its agencies, departments, officers, and employees as Additional Insureds using ISO forms CG2010 and CG2037 or their equivalents.

   b. If performance of the 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.
   c. If third-party cyber liability coverage is required, such coverage shall include the State of Vermont and its agencies, departments, officers, and employees as Additional Insureds.
   d. Additional Insured coverage shall be primary and non-contributory with any other insurance and self-insurance and shall include a waiver of subrogation in favor of the State of Vermont.
4. 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. The State 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. For work involving construction, workers compensation coverage shall include a waiver of subrogation in favor of the State of Vermont.
5. Notice of Cancellation or Change: with respect to all required coverage, there shall be no cancellation, change, potential exhaustion of aggregate limits, or non-renewal of insurance coverage(s) without thirty (30) days prior written notice to the State.