NORTHEAST DAIRY BUSINESS INNOVATION CENTER

Dairy Product Trade Show Assistance Grant

2024 REQUEST FOR APPLICATIONS

The Northeast Dairy Business Innovation Center (NE-DBIC) announces the availability of funds through the Dairy Product Trade Show Assistance Grant program, which will provide grants for dairy processors or producer associations to exhibit and sell value-added dairy products to a maximum of five regional and/or international business-to-business trade shows of the applicant's choosing as appropriate for their business. Applicants must not have exhibited at the proposed trade shows more than five times previously.

Licensed dairy processors and producer associations from the Northeast are invited to apply. Grants are available to applicants *on a rolling basis* in all 11 Northeast states: Connecticut, Delaware, Maine, Maryland, Massachusetts, New Hampshire, New Jersey, New York, Pennsylvania, Rhode Island, and Vermont.

KEY DATES

RFA Release Date: August 6, 2024

Rolling Application Opens: August 6, 2024

Rolling Application Closes: November 28, 2024 at 2:00 PM ET

Trade Shows Must Occur between August 20, 2024 and June 30, 2025

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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. WebGrants Guides and resources for registering and

applying can be found on our Resources for Grant Applicants and Recipients webpage and Frequently Asked Questions webpage.

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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 $45.8 million to support projects in the Northeast region of the U.S.

ELIGIBILITY SUMMARY

Dairy processors and dairy producer associations that are headquartered in the Northeast region of the U.S. may apply for this grant.

AVAILABLE FUNDS

$125,000

MINIMUM & MAXIMUM AWARD

Minimum: $5,000
Maximum: $20,000
Match: A 25% (cash or in-kind) match commitment is required.

Grant funds will be distributed to grantees over two payments throughout the course of the grant project. Unless otherwise arranged with the grant program manager, default payment structure of this grant is 50% of grant funds upfront and 50% of funds once the grant is complete.

PROJECT LENGTH

Trade shows must occur between August 20, 2024 and June 30, 2025. Participation at more than one trade show within this timeframe is encouraged though no more than five trade shows are allowed.

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 awards, AM22DBIVT1015.

FUNDING OPPORTUNITY DESCRIPTION

This grant is open to dairy processors and producer associations across the Northeast region of the United States seeking to exhibit and sell their value-added products at domestic and/or international business-to-business trade shows. This grant will support established value-added dairy processor businesses and producer associations in increasing exposure and promotion of their regionally produced dairy products. Grant funds can be used to cover the cost of attending tradeshows including registration, travel, costs of product samples, production and distribution of sell-sheets and other marketing materials, professional branding and design services, trade show booth set-up, personnel costs, and more.

Applicants are strongly encouraged to leverage funding from Food Export USA's Branded Program, which offers significant assistance and resources for those interested in growing their distribution. The Branded Program provides a 50% reimbursement for trade show marketing costs at both domestic and international business-to-business trade shows. This Dairy Product Trade Show Assistance Grant program can help complement an award from the Branded Program by further enhancing brand recognition and connecting with potential buyers. The Trade Show Assistance Grant cannot cover the same items covered by the Branded Program or other grants that cover trade show costs.

Applicants will be expected to use at least one Dairy Business Innovation Initiative resource, such as a webinar or report, related to marketing or distributing dairy products to develop their grant project, detailed below.

ELIGIBILITY

ELIGIBLE APPLICANTS

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

1. Dairy processor that:
    a. currently transforms raw milk into an edible product; and
    b. is licensed in a way that their product can be sold across state lines; and
    c. is headquartered or based in the Northeast; and
    d. sources or produces milk within the Northeast; and
    e. if a value-added processor, manufactures products within the Northeast.
2. Dairy producer association/dairy council which represents and promotes dairy products and business originating from the Northeast
    a. 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 founded and funded by businesses that operate in a specific industry. Associations receiving more than 50% of their funds from producer check-off dollars are not eligible.

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

- Certificate of Insurance listing the Vermont Agency of Agriculture, Food & Markets as an additional insured
- Current IRS Form W-9
- Unique Entity Identifier (UEI) number acquired via SAM.gov. *Applicants who do not already have a UEI number are strongly encouraged to start this process during the application period to ensure a timely start to their grant, if awarded.* If a producer association is applying on behalf of processors and plans to subaward funds to processors directly, the applicant and processors must all have UEI numbers.

ELIGIBLE PROJECTS

Project activities under this grant will enable value-added dairy businesses to expand their markets and increase business viability. Businesses can exhibit at up to five trade shows between August 20, 2024 and June 30, 2025 independently or through a producer association marketing on behalf of a group of value-added dairy businesses. Businesses cannot have exhibited at the proposed trade show more than five times previously. Eligible activities may include, but are not limited to:

- Personnel costs to travel to shows and staff an exhibitor booth
- Design and printing costs of sell-sheets, brochures, catalogs, banners, posters, recipe cards, and related materials for trade show use
- Trade show booth set-up: design and custom booth build-out costs
- Costs of product samples for trade show attendees
- Booth registration fees
- On-site fixture rentals including electricity hookup, product storage cases and coolers, chairs and tables for buyer meetings, handwash stations, etc.
- Export and international compliance paperwork, costs, and/or fees
- Travel costs including flights, mileage reimbursement, accommodation, and meals (aligned with GSA rates)
- Shipment of product for show sampling
- Shipment costs of product to trade show associated product competitions
- Professional Branding, Creative, and/or Design Services (with restrictions)::
    - Design of logo, signage, advertisements, collateral design
    - Design of market-compliant labels and packaging
    - Brand style guide, templates
    - Data visualization or infographics
    - Event materials including product price sheets, brochures, etc.

Please note that costs must be directly related to participation and exhibition in business-to-business trade shows. For businesses that are also seeking Branded Program trade show assistance/cost reimbursements, grant funds through this program may account for **no more than 50%** of total eligible costs that are covered through the Branded Program.

SECTION I. PROGRAM OVERVIEW

Grand funding can be used to reimburse trade show costs incurred before notification of an award if the trade show occurs after the date of application submission. Funding is not guaranteed until you are notified of an award.

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

All applications must demonstrate that the applicant has used at least one Dairy Business Innovation Initiative (DBII) technical assistance resource in the development of the proposal. Applicants are required to have integrated information from at least one of the following DBII resources in the development of this project:

- Dairy Processor Brand Strategy & Marketing Toolkit
- Strengthening Regional Dairy Distribution Report
- Goat & Sheep Dairy Market Research and Interactive Dashboard
- Market Intelligence: Dairy Export Opportunities and Import Displacement webinars through the Wisconsin Dairy Innovation Center.
- Webinars through the Wisconsin Dairy Innovation Center or Pacific Coast Coalition - Dairy Business Innovation Initiative. Selection to choose from includes: Fine Tuning your Marketing Strategy, Social Media Marketing, Developing E-Commerce, Developing an Export Program, Human Centered Design, Sales Go-To-Market Strategy, and more.

The following criteria must also be addressed:

- Applicants may apply to participate in up to five domestic or international business-to-business trade shows taking place between March 1, 2024 and December 31, 2024.
- Applicants must strategically integrate participation in trade show(s) with the business/organization's current marketing strategy and sales goals, focusing on connecting with distributors, acquiring insights on marketing products to a new audience, and enhancing buyer's knowledge about the products available.
- If funds will be used for the promotion of a single business's image, logo, or brand name (such as branding of packaging, logo development, etc.) there must be a reference to state or regional benefit for the duration of the grant period.
    - E.g., language on packaging that states "benefitting Northeast farmers"
- If funds will be used to contract for professional marketing/branding services, the selected professional service provider must be an individual or firm that specializes in marketing and/or branding services.
    - Applicants are expected to obtain quotes, and/or bids from potential contractors to help develop the project scope.
    - If applicant receives Dairy Product Trade Show Assistance Grant funding, any individual(s) or firms(s) hired by the applicant must adhere to 2021 – 2022 AMS Terms and Conditions, including alignment with contractor selection process and requirements around contractor rates. Reach out to the grant manager for this program to learn about the required bid process for contractors whose hourly rate is $87 or higher.

- Dairy Processor applicants (only) must:
    - Demonstrate they are prepared to meet increased product demand that may arise from attending and exhibiting at trade shows.
- Producer Association applicants (only) must:
    - Demonstrate how they will positively impact multiple dairy businesses and supply chain partners.

EXAMPLES: ELIGIBLE PROJECTS

1. *A dairy processor wants to attend the Good Food Mercantile and two other trade shows to promote their hard and soft cheeses. They read the Dairy Processor Brand Strategy and Marketing Toolkit to guide their work with a professional branding contractor. They request funds to work with a branding contractor to develop sell-sheets and brochures and for vendor fees and travel to all three shows. They are also leveraging the Branded Program cost-share program for freight costs for product samples and accommodation to attend one of the shows.*
2. *A dairy processor wants to attend the Summer Fancy Food Show to promote their yogurt and connect with distributors on the West Coast. They watch the DBII webinar on "Fine Tuning your Marketing Strategy" to understand current consumer buying trends. They request grants funds to cover registration fees, booth design, the cost of product samples, and marketing assets.*
3. *A producer association wants to represent three dairy businesses at an international trade show. They review the DBII resource on "Developing an Export Program." They request funds to work with a branding contractor who can help them design market-compliant labels and packaging for the three dairy businesses. They also request funding for printing the materials developed by the branding contractor.*

INELIGIBLE PROJECTS

- Applicants that do not source milk or other dairy products from within the Northeast region
- Projects that solely support the production/sales of raw fluid milk meant for human consumption without pasteurization
- Applications for attending trade shows with costs that are already covered by another grant program
- Projects that request funds for professional branding but do not attend a trade show
- Projects that cover the design and creation of marketing materials exclusively for non-trade show purposes
- Applicants who have exhibited at the proposed trade shows more than five times previously
- Projects that use grant funds for:
    - Event sponsorship or association membership fees
    - Construction or purchase of construction associated materials
    - Purchase or lease-to-own of land/building/facilities
    - Purchase of vehicles (rental vehicles for the duration of the project are allowable)
    - Unallowable costs/activities as outlined in the 2021 – 2022 AMS Terms and Conditions (8.0 Allowable Costs and Activities).

EXAMPLES: INELIGIBLE PROJECTS

- A processor wants to develop their website and work with a marketing and branding contractor to create product pamphlets.
    - **What would make this eligible?** The processor has reviewed at least one of the DBII resources and requests grant funds to attend two trade shows including registration and exhibitor fees and to work with a branding contractor to create product pamphlets for the tradeshows. Costs related to website development and marketing/branding activities that are not specific to trade shows are not eligible.
- A processor is awarded funding through Food Export USA's Branded Program to cover 50% of the cost of exhibitor fees. They apply to this Dairy Product Trade Show Assistance Grant to cover all of their exhibitor fees and the cost of product samples.
    - **What would make this eligible?** The processor has reviewed at least one of the DBII resources and requests grant funds for the remaining 50% cost of exhibitor fees not covered by the Branded program and the cost of product samples. Funds from this grant cannot pay for the same costs covered by another program.

APPLICATION REQUIREMENTS

SUPPORTING DOCUMENTATION

The applicant should include any additional information that shows the impacts of this grant such as quotes for work included in the proposed activities, impact on business viability, or other relevant information about the business/organization or the trade show(s) proposed.

To further increase the competitiveness of your application, upload any documentation that shows the development of the project idea, partnerships, funding received, and/or the viability of your business. Examples can include but are not limited to previous trade shows your business has attended, evidence of marketplace demand, bids, or other documentation that provides further context for your proposed project.

Bids or quotes from potential contractors are strongly encouraged and will make for more competitive applications.

HOW TO APPLY

All applications must be submitted via the WebGrants system at agriculturegrants.vermont.gov.

The business/organization that, if awarded, will receive the grant funds should apply under their own account in WebGrants. Technical assistance providers, grant writers, or others completing the application on behalf of the applicant should complete the application under the applicant's WebGrants account, and not under their own account.

Fiscal agents may apply on behalf of an applicant under the account of the fiscal agent. If awarded, a fiscal agent will hold all responsibility for the grant including reporting, financial management, equipment disposition, and all other granting requirements.

Applications will be accepted and reviewed on a rolling basis from August 30 – November 28, 2024 at 2:00 PM ET.

Be advised that technical assistance with WebGrants may not be available shortly before deadlines; please plan accordingly.

RESOURCES FOR APPLYING

- WebGrants Guides and resources for registering and applying can be found on our Resources for Applicants and Recipients webpage and our Frequently Asked Questions 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.

APPLICATION REVIEW

Applications will be reviewed by internal NE-DBIC staff on a rolling basis at the end of the month that they are submitted. Funding decisions are made according to scoring, reviewer comments, past grant performance, and with consideration to diversity across geography, herd type, size of operation, and impacts beyond the grantee.

If an application is approved for funding, it can retroactively cover trade shows expenses, provided that the trade show occurs after the date of application submission.

See Section III: Scoring Criteria.

AWARD INFORMATION

All applicants will be notified of the NE-DBIC decision regarding their project funding at the beginning of the month following their application submission.

KEY DATES

DATES MAY BE SUBJECT TO CHANGE

August 6, 2024	Request for Application (RFA) released
August 6, 2024	Rolling application period opens
November 28, 2024 at 2 PM ET	Rolling application period closes
30 days after attendance of last tradeshow	Final Report due date
August 20, 2024 – June 30, 2025	Trade shows must occur within this timeframe

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 an application in the WebGrants system.

APPLICANT INFORMATION

Applicant Information

- Business/organization name, legal entity (e.g., LLC, sole proprietor, etc.), primary grant contact information
- Contact information for person filling out the application, if different from primary grant contact

Applicant Eligibility

- Is the applicant a dairy processor that transforms raw milk into an edible product? *Processor applicants must be currently licensed and cannot solely market raw milk for human consumption to be eligible for this grant.* If yes:
    - Is the applicant currently licensed in a way that their product can be sold across state lines?
    - 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)?
    - Does the applicant source or produce milk that originates within the Northeast?
    - Does the applicant manufacture dairy products in the Northeast?
- Is the applicant a dairy producer association that represents and promotes dairy products originating from the Northeast? *For the purpose 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 founded and funded by businesses that operate in a specific industry.* If yes:
    - Describe your producer association, addressing: 1) founding members, 2) how the association is funded, 3) industry scope covered by the association, and 4) association activities. [3000-character limit]
    - If your association encompasses products other than dairies, describe how you will ensure that the project will benefit dairy only. [3000-character limit]
    - 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?
- Describe your business/organization in terms of size (gross sales, number of employees, production volume), markets, and number of years in business. [3000-character limit]
- Describe your business/organization’s strategy or approach to sustainable business growth and positioning. What is your long-term vision? [3000-character limit]

Entity History

- Has your business/organization received any federal or state grant in the past 5 years?

    - 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?
    - 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), including Food Export USA's Branded Program, for this specific project? *Leveraging other funds to complete this project is encouraged.* If yes:
    - Please list the other grants or programs you will apply for/have applied for in conjunction with this grant. [1000-character limit]
- Has your business/organization previously participated in trade shows? If yes:
    - Please list the trade shows you have participated in in the past and how many years you have participated. [1000-character limit]
- Will you be using loans to supplement this application?
    - 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 expanding your business/organization's sales and marketing strategy. [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 for your business? If yes:
    - Enter their name and organization

TRADE SHOW INFORMATION

Provide a detailed list of all trade shows you propose attending that will take place during the grant period and their associated details. Include at least one trade show but no more than five. Only list shows where you have exhibited no more than five times previously. For each trade show, provide:

- Name of trade show [300-character limit]
- Location of trade show [300-character limit]
- Trade show start date [300-character limit]
- Trade show end date [300-character limit]

- Type of buyers at the trade show [500-character limit]
- Products that will be exhibited and why [300-character limit]
- How many times have you exhibited at this trade show? [300-character limit]

Sample Trade Show Table

Name of Trade Show	Location	Start Date	End Date	Type of buyers	Products to be exhibited	How many times have you exhibited here?
Good Food Mercantile	San Francisco	September 15, 2024	September 15, 2024	Retailers, distributors, media representatives	• Farmstead cheddar and Jarlsberg style cheese • These our out flagship cheeses	0
Dairy Forum	Phoenix, Arizona	October 1, 2024	October 4, 2024	Distributors, retailers, restaurants	• Alpine cheese, Gruyere • Both are new cheeses for us	2

PROJECT DESCRIPTION

Project Details

- Describe your goals and objectives for attending this/these trade show(s). What will make this a successful and worthwhile investment? [4000-character limit]
- For each trade show, what activities and costs are you requesting grant funds for? How will they help you be successful while exhibiting? [4000-character limit]
- Describe how exhibiting at each tradeshow fits into your current marketing strategy (i.e. target markets, distributors, target customers, and goals). [4000-character limit]
- Identify at least one Dairy Business Innovation initiative technical assistance resource you referenced in the development of this proposal. [4000-character limit]
- Describe what you learned from this resource and how it shaped the development of your application. [4000-character limit]
- Describe the consequences of not receiving these funds. [2000-character limit]

Expected Outcomes

- Describe how you will evaluate the success of your project, including metrics you will track to show your progress. [2000-character limit]
- How do you expect attending each trade show will impact your target markets, distributors, target customers, and overall marketing strategy? [2000-character limit]
- Provide estimations of the impacts to the dairy sector resulting from this project. If the applicant will be the only impacted business, enter 1. If the metric doesn't apply to the project, enter 0.
    - Number of dairy businesses that will increase their knowledge about dairy product development or dairy business improvement methods.
    - Number of dairy businesses that will implement new or modified farming or processing production methods.
    - Will there be an increase in volume of Northeast regional milk that will enter the supply chain from the dairy businesses involved in the project?
    - Number of new partnerships that will be established between dairy businesses and supply chain businesses.
    - Will sales or marketing activities take place for dairy businesses within this project?
        - How many dairy businesses will implement new marketing strategies?
        - Number of existing sales outlets that will expand their dairy product offerings either by volume or expanded product category.
        - Number of new sales outlets that will expand their dairy product offerings.
        - Number of dairy businesses that will increase sales to meet market demand via expanded sales outlets.
        - Provide the increase of sales (in $) expected for all dairy businesses directly involved in this project.
    - How many jobs will be created because of this grant project?

BUDGET

Please complete the following budget table, listing all grant requests and match contributions.

Allowable Costs: 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).

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 $20,000, the applicant must demonstrate at least $5,000 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 to 25% of the total grant ask. (For example, a grant request for $7,000 in supplies and $10,000 in contractual/consultant could be matched with $5,000 of personnel.)
- Match contributions must take place during the grant period.

SECTION II. FULL APPLICATION

Budget Table (example)

Expense Category	Grant Funds Requested	Applicant Contribution - Cash Match	Applicant Contribution - In-kind Match	Project Total
Personnel	$0.00	$1,000.00	$0.00	$1,000.00
Fringe Benefits	$0.00	$0.00	$0.00	$0.00
Contractual/ Consultant	$5,000.00	$0.00	$0.00	$5,000.00
Supplies	$2,000.00	$1,000.00	$0.00	$3,000.00
Equipment	$0.00	$0.00	$0.00	$0.00
Travel	$0.00	$1,750.00	$0.00	$1,750.00
Other	$10,000.00	$500.00	$0.00	$10,500.00
Totals	**$17,000.00**	**$4,250.00**	**$0.00**	**$21,250.00**

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 $5,000 – $20,000.*
- Amount of matching funds.
- 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 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 'Personnel' expenses included in the 'Grant Funds Requested' 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 Funds Requested' 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 '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) 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 Funds Requested' 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 'Equipment' expenses included in the 'Grant Funds Requested' column of your above budget? *Includes rental equipment or purchase of specialized 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. [3000-character limit]
- 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.* If yes:
    - 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 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. [3000-character limit]

Anticipated Program 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

Letters of Commitment or Support

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

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 milk processors, other farmers or producer associations who will benefit from the project, and retail outlets. Letters of Support should describe the benefits of the project both for the applicant business and the greater dairy sector.

While there are no required Letters of Support for this application, letters will increase the competitiveness of the application, especially for producer association applicants.

If submitting a Letter of 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

To increase the competitiveness of your application, upload any documentation that shows the development of the project idea, partnerships, funding received, and/or the viability of your business.

- If you are requesting grant funds to work with a professional branding and design contractor, **bids or quotes from potential contractors are strongly encouraged.**

Applicants are also encouraged to upload any additional documentation that will support the request for funds. This could include documentation that demonstrates:

- the research and development of the project concept
- examples of previous work that this project will build upon (market research, training, business investments, etc.)
- proof of grants or loans to be used as match
- viability of your business/organization
- evidence of marketplace demand
- and/or other documentation that provides further context for your proposed project

III. SCORING CRITERIA

REVIEWER SCORING CRITERIA

While this grant program may not be considered highly competitive, understanding the scoring criteria is essential, as we require a minimum score of 75 for funding consideration. This scoring system serves as a guide to assess the soundness of each investment opportunity, ensuring that selected projects align with the purpose of this grant program and will make a meaningful impact on the applicant's business.

Project Proposal & Expected Outcomes (65 points)

Trade show(s) will help advance the applicant's marketing plan and goals for growth.	25 points
Applicant provides clear and relevant reasoning for the trade show(s) they propose attending. The show(s) take place between August 20, 2024 and June 30, 2025 and applicant has not exhibited more than five times previously at any of the proposed shows.	15 points
The costs in this application are eligible for funding and will be a worthwhile investment.	10 points
Applicant demonstrates that they are well positioned to take on additional sales and/or growth opportunities that exposure at trade show(s) will generate.	10 points
Applicant provides reasonable expected outcomes via a useful plan for evaluating the success of their project including appropriate metrics to track.	5 points

Budget & Documentation (35 points)

Budget and budget narrative are realistic and sufficient to accomplish the work proposed. The request is within the allowable funding range of $5,000 to $20,000.	15 points
Applicant has leveraged the required percentage of match contribution and provided sufficient detail.	10 points
All required letters of support/letters of commitment, and supporting documentation meet the requirements outlined in the RFA and clearly illustrate that the grant funds will be a sound investment.	10 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 curent 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: 50%** of the total grant will be paid to the grantee upon receipt of certificate of insurance and Form W-9, confirmation of UEI, 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.
- **Final payment: 50%** of the total grant will be issued upon approval of grantee's final performance report and receipt of a claim in WebGrants.

The final performance report is due no later than 30 days after the last day of the last trade show attended. 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:

SECTION IV. GRANT MANAGEMENT & REPORTING

1. Grantees will submit a Final Performance Report and complete a survey no later than thirty (30) days from the grant end date. 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. How many dairy businesses directly benefited from this grant project?
        iii. How many jobs were created because of this grant project?
        iv. Provide the number of dairy businesses 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. developed new product lines
            4. developed new dairy product lines
                a. how many product categories were created?
            5. improved existing dairy product lines
                a. how many product categories were improved?
            6. increased their annual sales
                a. total annual sales increase (in $) across all dairy businesses directly involved in this project
                b. how many of those businesses had increased sales <u>due to marketing and/or promotion activities</u> that were a part of this project?
            7. implemented new marketing approaches through this project
        v. Provide the number of <u>existing sales outlets</u> in each of the following categories that expanded their dairy product offerings either by volume or expanded product category, resulting from this project: farmers markets, wholesale markets/buyers, restaurants, retailers, distributors, food hubs, school food programs, other (specify)
        vi. Provide the number of <u>new sales outlets</u> in each of the following categories that expanded their dairy product offerings either by volume or expanded product category, resulting from this project: farmers markets, wholesale markets/buyers, restaurants, retailers, distributors, food hubs, school food programs, other (specify)

vii. If there were new partnerships established between dairy businesses and supply chain businesses, as a result of this project:
    1. How many new partnerships were established?
    2. How many of these new partnerships resulted in expanded or improved local/regional dairy infrastructure?
    3. How many of those new partnerships resulted in higher profits?
    4. How many of those new partnerships resulted in improved marketing channels?
    5. How many of those new partnerships resulted in an increase in the volume of Northeast regional milk that entered the supply chain?
    6. How many of those new partnerships included a dairy cooperative?
viii. If the grantee is a dairy business, rate the level of satisfaction/outlook for the future of your dairy business before and after the grant
ix. If the 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 generate 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.