



VERMONT AGENCY OF AGRICULTURE, FOOD & MARKETS

Resilient Food Systems Infrastructure Grant

FISCAL YEAR 2024 REQUEST FOR APPLICATIONS (RFA)

KEY DATES

Publication Date: April 17, 2024

Optional Grant Applicant Webinar: April 30, 2024 11:00am – 12:00pm (register [here](#))

Application Opens: May 1, 2024

Application Closes: June 5, 2024 at 1:59pm

Estimated Award Notification: September 2024 (award notification is contingent upon United States Department of Agriculture (USDA) approval of project plans; this date is subject to change)

Estimated Project Start: October 2024 (project start date is contingent upon USDA approval of project plans; this date is subject to change)

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CONTACT INFORMATION

PROGRAM QUESTIONS

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WEBGRANTS TECHNICAL ASSISTANCE

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Agency of Agriculture, Food & Markets staff can assist applicants during State of Vermont business hours, Monday–Friday, 7:45 AM to 4:30 PM. Please note that immediate assistance may not be available shortly before deadlines.

WEBGRANTS

Applications for this program must be submitted through the grants management system, WebGrants, at agriculturegrants.vermont.gov.

REGISTRATION

If you're new to WebGrants, submit the [WebGrants Registration Form](#). It usually takes about two business days to process registrations. Make sure to register for an account well before the application deadline.

SUBMISSION POLICY

Applicants must follow all instructions in this request for applications (RFA), including the dates and times for submitting applications. The Agency of Agriculture, Food & Markets will only consider the last complete submission through WebGrants before the deadline as the official application. We cannot accept incomplete or late applications after the deadline, barring exceptional circumstances. The WebGrants system will not allow application submission after the deadline.

SUBMISSION CONFIRMATION

After you've submitted your application successfully, you'll be taken to a page confirming your submission. This page will have an Application ID number. You'll also get an email confirming your submission.

SECTION 1: OVERVIEW & ELIGIBILITY

PROGRAM PURPOSE

The Vermont Agency of Agriculture has entered into a cooperative agreement with the US Department of Agriculture (USDA) and the Agricultural Marketing Service (AMS) to administer the Resilient Food System Infrastructure (RFSI) grant program in Vermont.

The purpose of the RFSI grant program is to build resilience in the middle of the food supply chain and strengthen local and regional food systems by creating new revenue streams. This includes supporting developing markets for small and mid-sized Vermont farms and food businesses, especially projects that will:

- Create more diverse local and regional market options;
- Support competitive and profitable market access;
- Retain more of the value chain dollar in communities;
- Create more economic opportunities for communities;
- Expand product options, increase access, and create new, more, and better markets.

The program aims to:

- Promote development of Vermont value-added products;
- Support initiatives that provide fair prices, fair wages, and new and safe job opportunities that keep profits in rural communities;
- Increase and diversify processing capacity across the state, with an emphasis on underserved communities;
- Improve the aggregation, processing, manufacturing, storing, transporting, wholesaling, and distribution of Vermont food products for local and regional markets;
- Target gaps and opportunities in pandemic assistance and existing USDA grant programs that support the agricultural supply chain.

Funding will be focused on projects that:

- Improve job quality through increased wages, benefits, and/or worker safety and well being;
- Focus on small and medium-sized enterprises that expand services and product offerings for consumers and producers (with an emphasis on value-added products);
- Demonstrate local support for the project;
- Are submitted by cooperatives, farmer, and worker-owned enterprises.

The middle-of-the-supply-chain refers to processing and aggregation/distribution. This includes all post-harvest processing, value-add, storage, manufacturing, aggregation, distribution, transport, and wholesale before it reaches the consumer or a retail outlet. Projects must support the promotion of local and regional agricultural and food products.

Funds cannot be used for agricultural production activities or farming costs including farm equipment, tools, supplies, gardening, or production related labor/training. However, on-farm post-harvest processing, preservation, value-add, and storage/cold storage are allowable activities. Funds additionally cannot be used for retail space or consumer-facing outlets. Both farm production and retail are considered the start and end of the food supply chain and thus ineligible for this grant.

The RFSI program is not intended to support meat, poultry, or wild-caught seafood projects.

Please note that a FAQ will be posted online and updated regularly. To submit a question, please contact the grant manager, Julia Scheier at Julia.Scheier@vermont.gov or 802-522-7042.

EQUIPMENT ONLY TRACK

There will be a separate, equipment-only RFSI grant later this year. Information about this track will be available in August with applications open in the early fall 2024. Projects will begin in early 2025. Grants will range from \$30,000 to \$100,000 with no match requirement.

While we strongly encourage entities to apply to which track is the best fit for their business needs, an entity may apply to both tracks. However, they can only receive funding under one. Applications will know if they are advancing in the RFSI Infrastructure Track to USDA approval before the Equipment-Only Track opens for applications. Additional entities under the same ownership will not be awarded a second grant, regardless of which track the additional applicant applies to.

PRIORITIZATION OF BENEFICIARIES

RFSI is intended to prioritize projects who will benefit those who have historically had difficulty accessing capital or markets. For the purposes of RFSI, prioritized project beneficiaries include those who are a:

- Limited Resource Farmer or Rancher, i.e. someone:
 - With direct or indirect gross farm sales not more than the current indexed value in each of the previous two years, and
 - Who has a total household income at or below the national poverty level for a family of four, or less than 50 percent of county median household income in each of the previous two years.
 - If unsure, a Self-Determination Tool is available here: <https://lrftool.sc.egov.usda.gov/>.
- New and Beginning Farmer or Rancher, i.e. someone who has not operated a farm or ranch, or who has operated a farm or ranch for not more than 10 consecutive years, and who
 - Will materially and substantially participate in the operation of the farm or ranch.
 - In the case of a contract with an individual, individually or with the immediate family, material and substantial participation requires that the

individual provides substantial day-to-day labor and management of the farm or ranch, consistent with the practices in the county or State where the farm is located.

- In the case of a contract made with a legal entity, all members must meet these requirements.
- Veteran Farmer, Rancher, or Producer, i.e. someone who has served in the United States Army, Navy, Marine Corps, Air Force, or Coast Guard, including the reserve component thereof; was released from service under conditions other than dishonorable; and:
 - Has not operated a farm or ranch, or has operated a farm or ranch for not more than 10 years; or
 - Who first obtained status as a veteran during the most recent 10-year period.
 - A legal entity or joint operation can be a Veteran Farmer or Rancher only if all individual members independently qualify.

Projects that have community beneficiaries that are within one or more of the above three categories will receive prioritization within our scoring rubric, as outlined on page 26.

ELIGIBLE APPLICANTS

Eligible applicants must be domestically owned, physically located in Vermont, and registered in Vermont with the Vermont Secretary of State. Sole proprietors using a business name other than their own name must have their assumed business name (formerly known as a trade name) registered with the Vermont Secretary of State.

Eligible entities can include:

- Agricultural producers or processors, or groups of agricultural producers and processors operating middle-of-the-supply-chain activities such as processing, aggregation, distribution of targeted agricultural products.
- Nonprofit organizations operating middle-of-the-supply-chain activities such as processing, aggregation, distribution of targeted agricultural products.
- Local government entities operating middle-of-the-supply-chain activities such as processing, aggregation, distribution of targeted agricultural products.
- Institutions such as schools, universities, or hospitals bringing producers together to establish cooperative or shared infrastructure or invest in equipment that will benefit multiple producers middle-of-the-supply-chain activities such as processing, aggregation, distribution of targeted agricultural product. These include organizations such schools (K-12; colleges/universities), hospitals, food banks, gleaners, food rescue, workplace cafeterias, correctional facilities, farmers markets, and care centers (senior, preschools).
- For-profit entities operating middle-of-the-supply-chain activities such as processing, aggregation, or distribution of targeted agricultural products, whose activities are primarily focused for the benefit of local and regional producers, and

that meet the eligibility requirements of the Small Business Administration (SBA) small business size standards, matched to North American Industry Classification System (NAICS) code. To determine if your business meets the definition, please visit the [SBA Size Standards](#) webpage and [Size Standards Tool](#).

Ineligible applicants include:

- Those based outside of Vermont or not registered with the Vermont Secretary of State.
- Entities that do not engage in middle-of-the-supply chain activities, such as production-only or retail-only entities.
- Entities that do not focus on increasing market opportunities for local and regional food products.

Applicants are required to obtain a UEI in SAM.gov prior to being issued an award.

New or start-up businesses are allowed. However, they must be able to clearly describe business readiness, implementation capacity, and staff ability to effectively manage federal grant funds and reporting.

ELIGIBLE PROJECTS

Eligible projects must expand capacity and infrastructure for the aggregation, processing, manufacturing, storing, transporting, wholesaling, or distribution of locally and regionally produced food products. They should also offer more and better market opportunities and new streams of revenue to small and mid-sized agricultural producers, including those who may not have access to value-added opportunities or processing to meet market demand for premium or value-added products.

The middle-of-the-supply-chain refers to processing and aggregation/distribution. Funds cannot be used for agricultural production activities/costs including farm equipment, tools, supplies, gardening, or production related labor/training. However, on-farm post-harvest processing, preservation, value-add, and storage/cold storage are allowable activities, if they meet the other requirements of RFSI funding.

Applicants must pick at least one eligible project type:

- Expanding processing capacities, including adding product types, increasing production volumes, and supporting new wholesale/retail, product lines.
- Modernizing equipment or facilities through upgrades, repairs, or retooling; (e.g., adapting product lines for institutional procurement or adding parallel processing capacity).
- Purchase and installation of specialized equipment, such as processing components, sorting equipment, packing and labeling equipment, or delivery vehicles. *Please note that there is a separate, equipment-only track that will be announced in August 2024. If your project only requires equipment, this may be a better fit. Please see page 4 for more details.*

- Modernizing manufacturing, tracking, storage, and information technology systems.
- Construction of a new facility.
- Increasing packaging and labeling capacities that meet compliance requirements under applicable laws (e.g. sealing, bagging, boxing, labeling, conveying, and product moving equipment).
- Increasing storage space, including cold storage.
- Developing, customizing, or installing climate-smart equipment that reduces greenhouse gas emissions, increases efficiency in water use, improves air and/or water quality, and/or meets one or more of USDA's climate action goals.
- Modernizing equipment or facilities to ensure food safety, including associated Hazard, Analysis, and Critical Control Points (HACCP) consultation, plan development and employee training.

Ineligible projects include:

- Projects supporting meat, poultry, wild-caught seafood, exclusively animal feed and forage produce, cannabis, fiber, landscaping products, tobacco, dietary supplements, or hemp-derived CBD.
- Projects that solely increase production without meeting other objectives of RFSI funding.
- Projects that have already received federal funding for the same activities. Subsequent activities from prior funding are allowable.

Vermont businesses that conduct processing or value-add for agricultural products that are not local or regional may be eligible. However, these will not be as competitive as projects that utilize local and regional raw agricultural products or ingredients.

If a project includes a mixed-use space for items that are both eligible and non-eligible for RFSI, such as storage for vegetables, dairy, and meat, the grantee may prorate the project amount so that the grant funds requested can only be for the percentage of the project used for allowable items. For example, if a storage space costing \$700,000 will house approximately 70% allowable products and 30% unallowable products, the total RFSI project amount would be for 70% of \$700,000, or \$490,000. Match would be based off of the eligible RFSI project costs.

ELIGIBLE EXPENSES

Eligible expenses can include:

- Hiring term-limited personnel to assist with project implementation activities.
- Analyzing potential facility upgrades and changes that meet regulatory requirements, obtaining design and/or architecture services, etc. (to the extent these costs are directly related to the project).
- Planning for Hazard Analysis Critical Control Points (HACCP) or other food safety or worker safety measures or equipment recommendations.
- Upgrades or new facilities for processing specific agricultural products, such as:

- On-farm post-harvest processing, preservation, and storage/cold storage; post-harvest cleaning and grading;
- Aggregator warehouse and storage, including cooperatives;
- Purchase of freezing equipment, freezer, or cold storage;
- Processing, canning, preserving and pasteurization;
- Preparation and packing;
- Drying, hulling, shelling, and milling;
- Cooking, baking, juicing, distilling, fermenting.
- Construction or renovation activities, including:
 - Additions, improvements, modifications, replacements, rearrangements, reinstallations, renovations, alterations, or construction on an existing building or facility.
 - Construction and construction-related materials, which may include, but are not limited to, the purchase of building materials such as wood, nails, concrete, asphalt, roofing, gravel, sand, paint, insulation, drywall, or plumbing.
- Purchasing special purpose equipment, as long as all applicable considerations are met, as outlined on page 9.
- Special purpose vehicles relevant to the scope of work, such as delivery vehicles or refrigerated trucks.
- Repair or update existing equipment.
- Rental costs.
- Retail related activities can include creating distribution channels to new retail opportunities, or expanding processing and packaging capacities, including adding product types, increasing production volumes, and supporting new retail product lines.
- Project-readiness and pre-development expenses, such as feasibility studies, permits, design, engineering, regulatory. However, these can be no more than 50% of total grant request. The project must include implementation of these plans and the grantee must be able to report on supply chain impact outcomes of the project.
- Indirect costs, typically 10% de minimus. Please note, if you have a Negotiated Indirect Cost Rate Agreement (NICRA), a copy must be submitted with your application.
- Sales tax and shipping costs for equipment/supplies, as long as it is on the quote.

Ineligible costs include:

- Pre-award costs.
- Purchase of land, new buildings, and new facilities.
- Purchase of general-purpose equipment (e.g. general use motor vehicles, office furniture, office air conditioners, printers, copiers) or lease agreements to own (i.e. lease-to-own or rent-to-own).

- Compensation for injuries or damage to property arising from project activities.
- Activities that have received a federal award from another program.
- Expenses that will be reimbursed in another way.
- Agricultural production expenses, i.e. farm equipment, tools, supplies, labor/training for production.
- Marketing expenses.
- Waste management systems.
- Sub-awards.
- Costs of doing business or business maintenance costs
- Contingency costs
- Anything that is excluded in the [AMS General Terms and Conditions](#).

Expenses can be for equipment or upgrades to within a leased building/space, as long as the landlord allows for improvements or modifications to be made to the space. We encourage you to submit an additional letter of support from the landlord explicitly allowing the renovations you are proposing.

SPECIALIZED EQUIPMENT CONSIDERATIONS

Applicants may include the purchase of special purpose equipment as part of their project. Special purpose equipment is defined under the allowable costs of the [Resilient Food Systems Infrastructure Program Terms and Conditions](#) as follows:

- Purchases of special purpose equipment (such as, canners, hulling processors, reverse osmosis systems, egg packing machines, flotation tanks, roasters, or other processing equipment, packing and labeling equipment, or delivery vehicles) are eligible expenses
- All equipment purchases must meet the following criteria:
 - Equipment is necessary for the technical activities of the agreement and is not otherwise reasonably available and accessible.
 - Equipment is normally charged as a direct cost by the organization and is acquired in accordance with organizational practices.
 - Equipment must be used solely to meet the purpose of the program and objectives of the agreement.
 - Equipment is subject to the full range of acquisition, use, management, and disposition requirements under 2 CFR § 200.313 as applicable.

The recipient cannot encumber property improved as part of the cooperative agreement award and must follow the requirements of [2 CFR §200.311](#) before disposing of the property. The real property will be used for the originally authorized purpose as long as needed for that purpose. When real property is no longer needed for the originally authorized purpose, the recipient must obtain disposition instructions from AMS.

The following alternatives will apply:

1. Retain title after compensating the Federal awarding agency as described in 2 CFR Part 200.311(c)(1);
2. Sell the property and compensate the federal awarding agency as specified in 2 CFR Part 200.311(c)(2); or
3. Transfer the title to the Federal awarding agency or to a third Party designated/approved by the Federal awarding agency as specified in 2 CFR Part 200.311(c)(3).

For applications that request grant funds for specialized equipment in their budget, a current quote is required for the equipment and any associated installation costs. Specialized equipment costs over \$5,000 per unit.

More information and requirements for equipment and disposition can be found in the [Agricultural Marketing Service Terms and Conditions](#).

Applicants will be required to submit a recent quote for all equipment that will be purchased with grant funds.

AVAILABLE FUNDS

Approximately \$2,000,000 is available in one-time funding.

MINIMUM & MAXIMUM AWARD

\$100,000–\$500,000 per award.

MATCHING FUNDS, REDUCED MATCH, & VERIFICATION LETTERS

At least 50% of total RFSI project cost is required as match, which must be committed or secured at the time the applicant is recommended for an award.

Match can be reduced to 25% of project costs for those who qualify as a Beginning Farmer or Rancher, Veteran Farmer or Rancher, or Limited Resource Farmer or Rancher. There is an option to self-certify in the application.

Match is calculated based off of total RFSI project cost, not a percentage of the funding requested. The total RFSI project cost must be for the project which meets the RFSI goals and to which all costs are allowable. For example, if the project is a mixed use space, the total RFSI project cost is the percentage of that space that will house allowable RFSI items.

Applicants can provide more than the required match but this will not provide any advantage during final application review. However, all RFSI project costs must be accounted for.

For example, a food hub wants to build a new aggregation space, which will include buying land, construction of a building, installing equipment and systems, and setting up a retail space within the food hub. Purchasing the land and setting up the retail space are not allowable costs under RFSI. Therefore the RFSI project would be considered only the building construction and installation of equipment and systems. Total RFSI

project cost should only include those expenses. If the construction and installation totals \$500,000, the total RFSI project cost will be \$500,000, even though the land purchase and setting up the retail space will be additional costs to the business outside of the scope of RFSI. In this scenario, the applicant may request \$250,000 in RFSI grant funds, but they are required to provide a 50% match, which will be \$250,000. If an applicant qualifies for a reduced match, they are required to provide 25% of total RFSI project costs as match, which would be \$125,000 and could request RFSI grant funds for \$375,000. The applicant is required to show how they will pay for all RFSI project costs. Therefore, if a RFSI project is quite large and the total cost for building construction and installation is actually \$1,000,000, and the applicant is asking for \$300,000 in RFSI funds, they will be required to show match for the remaining \$700,000. The 50% match is a minimum amount and all RFSI project funds must be factored in. However, the business does not need to provide match for the non-RFSI components, such as land purchase and retail setup.

Applicants must submit one signed match verification letter for EACH cash or in-kind resource signed by the matching organization. A Match Verification Template Letter from USDA is included [here](#). If applicants do not use this template, they must include the following information in their documentation:

- Project Applicant
- Project Title
- Cash Commitment per year (if applicable) and Total Cash Match
- In-kind Contribution per year (if applicable) and Total In-kind Match. Break down items into categories as applicable:
 - Salaries (employee name, title, duties, pay rate/hr., amount matched per year)
 - Items/Activities (fair market value per unit, how value determined, and amount matched per year)
 - Explanation of how each type of match will correspond to the budget or be used by the applicant.
 - Signature of Matching Organization Representative with typed name and title.

Match can include:

- Cash
- In-kind, unless they are being used toward satisfying a match requirement under any other Federal grant agreement.
- Unrecovered indirect costs, i.e. the difference between the amount charged to the Federal award and the amount that could have been charged to the Federal award under the potential recipients approved negotiated indirect cost rate. A copy of the NICRA must be submitted if using that negotiated rate. Otherwise, indirect can be assumed to be the 10% de minimus rate.
- The percentage of a worker's time that will be directly related to the RFSI activities.

- State or other non-federal sources of funding. Must comply with [applicable provisions](#).

Match cannot include program income or expenses considered ineligible under RFSI. You may use a loan from a federal entity as match but may not use federally funded grant awards as match.

PROJECT LENGTH

Approximately Fall 2024 (upon USDA approval and Grant Agreement execution) to February 28, 2027.

LETTERS OF SUPPORT AND COMMITMENT

All applications must include at least one letter of support and one letter of commitment.

- Letters of support articulate general support for the grant request. Support letters reference involvement with applicant and/or the community and/or explain how the funding will help address a need or solve a problem. Content could include:
 - Description of services or individuals that benefited from applicant's work
 - Expression of interest in how the funding will benefit the community
- Letters of commitment demonstrate the project partners' involvement and identify the specific contributions they will make to ensure the project's success. Content could include:
 - Description of previous collaboration with applicant
 - The role the partner/stakeholder will play in the proposed project
 - Financial support they will contribute (if applicable)
 - Type and value of any in-kind financial support they will provide – labor, facility space, equipment (match is not required)
 - Estimated # of units to be supplied/purchased from applicant

Additional letters of support and/or commitment above and beyond an application's requirement will also be accepted. Letters should convey project readiness, demonstration of project impact, and applicant capacity for implementation.

FINANCIAL DOCUMENTATION

There is no requirement for submitting business plans or financial documents. However, there is optional space to include such documents within the application, if the applicant feels it would strengthen their application. In addition to the option of including financial documentation, there will be space within the application to speak to financial viability and how this project fits into the overall financial health or strategic plan of the applicant.

EVIDENCE OF CRITICAL INFRASTRUCTURE

Applicants must submit Evidence of Critical Infrastructure if critical resources and/or infrastructure are necessary for the completion of the project. Applicants must submit in a Word or PDF document that critical resources and infrastructure necessary to support the initiation and completion of a project are in place.

This letter should cover the entire project and helps to ensure that the location that these activities are prepared and available to start when awarded. Land, structures, and other critical resources must be in place and in working condition at the time of application submission. The letter must indicate the any critical resources that are necessary for initiation and completion of the project and certify that they are in place and committed prior to the start date of the project. The author/signer of the letter would be the landlord/owner/city that is providing the required resource/infrastructure/space/etc.

Applicants are encouraged to use the AMS Suggested Evidence of Critical Resources and Infrastructure Template Letter included [here](#). If applicants do not use this template, they must submit documentation that includes at minimum:

- Project Applicant
- Project Title
- A statement about committing/approving/granting permission, etc. of the critical resource or infrastructure to the project for the time period.
- A description of the approved use of the critical resource or infrastructure approved for the project, any costs associated with its use, and any qualifying circumstances for its use.

FEDERAL ENVIRONMENTAL LAWS AND REGULATIONS

All projects must comply with the National Environmental Policy Act (NEPA) and will be required to submit relevant materials for this review. Applicants will submit with their initial application an Environmental Questionnaire, included [here](#), to help determine the need for further NEPA compliance. This questionnaire will cover items such as surface water, ground disturbance or soil and land, vegetation, cultural resources, water quality, socioeconomic/environmental justice, air quality/climate change, hazardous waste, and land use/utility considerations. States will then complete a pre-screening worksheet, based on the questionnaire answers, to help determine the need for further NEPA review.

If there is determined to be a need for site-specific environmental screenings, the State will first inform applicants that they will need to conduct further NEPA compliance; it will be up to the applicant to determine if it is in their best interest to begin the review before notification of awards or wait until they are notified, delaying their project timeline.

States will include all information in the final recommendation sent to USDA; USDA may ask for further information to inform the NEPA compliance process.

APPLICANT AND PROJECT SUPPORT

There may be applicant support, technical assistance, and/or project implementation services available to RFSI grantees and applicants. Please stay tuned for more information and how to be connected to services or contact Jake Claro at jake@vsjf.org if you're interested in learning more about this support.

SECTION 2: APPLICATION PROCESS & CONTENT

HOW TO APPLY

Applications must be submitted via the online grants management system, [WebGrants](#), at agriculturegrants.vermont.gov between May 1, 2024 and June 5, 2024 at 1:59pm. Paper applications will not be accepted. Application components are outlined below as they will appear in WebGrants.

For technical instructions on the application submission process, please see the [WebGrants Application Guide](#) at agriculture.vermont.gov/grants/howtoapply.

STANDARD APPLICATION QUESTIONS

Questions in the following four sections are asked of everyone who applies for a grant offered by VAAFM's Agriculture Development Division. Some questions in these sections are optional and may not apply to all applicants. Questions marked with an asterisk (*) are required.

Please note that a few questions were updated as of April 30, 2024 and are marked with a double asterisk (**) below.

Applicant Information

- Which of the following categories best describes the person/people completing this application? Please select all that apply*
 - Owner of applicant organization
 - Employee of the applicant organization
 - Technical service provider
 - Business advisor
 - Grant writer
 - Family/friend
 - Other
- Name*
- Email address*
- Phone number*
- Preferred method of communication*
 - Email
 - Phone
 - Text
- Job title*
- How did you hear about this funding opportunity?*
 - State agriculture dept./agency
 - Local ag-extension
 - Service provider/business advisor
 - News outlet
 - Social media

- NE-DBIC newsletter
- Word of Mouth
- Other

Applicant's Business/Organization Information

Some questions in this section are optional and may not apply to all applicants.

- Legal name of the organization*
- Business or organization type*
 - C Corporation
 - S Corporation
 - Sole Proprietorship
 - Partnership
 - Limited Liability Company
 - 501C
 - Religious Organization
 - Private Foundation
 - Political Organization
 - Producer Trade Association
 - Public School
 - Independent Private School
 - Early Childhood Education Program
 - Public College
 - Other Nonprofit
 - Other
- Street address*
- Town/City*
- County*
- Number of full-time employees, including owner(s)*
- Number of part-time and seasonal employees
- Total number of volunteer hours that benefit your organizations in a typical year
- Years in operation*
- Provide the organization's website if one exists
- Share any social media handles the organization uses
- Is the organization a farm, forestry or other land-based operation?*
 - If yes, how many acres are currently in production?
 - How many acres, if any, are currently in conservation?
 - How many acres of leased or rented land does the organization use for production and/or processing?
- Have you applied for or received a grant through the Vermont Agency of Agriculture, Food & Markets in the past five years?*

Optional Business/Organization Information

- What is the applicant business/organization's most recent annual operating budget?
- What is the median hourly wage for all employees?
- Which of the following benefits does your organization provide to its employees and/or volunteers?
- Does the organization hire H-2A farmworkers?

Voluntary Demographic Information

The Vermont Agency of Agriculture, Food and Markets is collecting voluntary demographic information to better serve our constituents and inform the development of future grant programs. Please click the link to complete this anonymous survey: <https://forms.office.com/g/dp8zqWrgxL>

The demographic survey is hosted through a separate online platform to ensure that any information collected through the survey cannot be linked in any way to your WebGrants application. Funding decisions are based solely on the information provided in your WebGrants application. Any information collected through the demographic survey is anonymous and will only be used to help improve the programming and services offered by the Agriculture Development Division of the Vermont Agency of Agriculture, Food & Markets.

RESILIENT FOOD SYSTEMS INFRASTRUCTURE APPLICATION QUESTIONS

Business Information

- Unique Entity Identifier (UEI) from Sam.gov
- Primary point of contact:
 - Name
 - Title
 - Phone number
 - Email address
 - Physical address
 - Mailing address
- Type of Applicant (choose one)
 - Agricultural producer or processor
 - For-profit entity
 - Nonprofit organization
 - Local government
 - Institutions
- Describe your organization or the organizations you will be working with in terms of size (gross sales, number of employees, production volume, community impact, markets, and number of years in operation).

- **Please explain your markets or constituents, critical partnerships, and systems for internal financial management.
- ** Describe your business model and explain how your business is viable and sustainable. If it is not, what steps are you taking to work towards a more viable business or sustainable nonprofit?
- ** How does this project align with your long-term business model, viability, or sustainability of your organization?
- Do you currently work with a business advisor or technical assistance provider to support the financial health, future planning, and/or viability of your organization? Please explain why or why not.
- Have you received technical assistance in the preparation of this project, or do you plan to receive related technical assistance during the course of your grant project? If so, please list who you're working with and in what capacity.

Project Overview

- Project Title: Provide a descriptive title in 15 words or less
- Proposed Project Start Date
 - The default start date will be October 15, 2024. This date is dependent on how quickly USDA approves the list of recommended applications. Please either put October 15, 2024 OR a later date, if your project will begin later. The anticipated project cannot begin earlier than October 15, 2024.
- Proposed Project End Date
 - The default end date will be February 28, 2027. If your project will end earlier, please put an earlier date. The end date cannot be later than February 28, 2027.
- Executive Summary: Include a Project Summary of 250 words or less suitable for dissemination to the public. A Project Summary provides a very brief (one sentence, if possible) description of your project. This should include:
 - The name of the applicant organization
 - The project's purpose, deliverables, and expected outcomes and
 - A description of the general tasks/activities to be completed during the project period to fulfill this goal
- Project description: Offer a detailed description of what your project will entail, its scope, and the benefit to local and regional products and producers.
- Provide the specific issue, problem or need that the project will address.
- Include a timeline of grant-funded activities, including major milestones, deliverables, and who will be responsible for each activity.
- ** What will happen if you do not receive this funding? Will the project move forward, be delayed, or not happen? What will the impact be on the business?
- ** Are you interested in receiving information about business coaching or additional infrastructure planning technical assistance (including capital or

financial planning for infrastructure development) that can support your grant project?

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

Objectives, Beneficiaries, and Outcomes

- Provide a list of the objectives that this project hopes to achieve. For each objective, including a description.
- Project beneficiaries
 - Estimate the number of project beneficiaries
 - Check if this project directly benefits (check all that apply):
 - Limited resource farmer or rancher
 - New and beginning farmer or rancher
 - Veteran farmer or rancher
 - Veteran producer
- Other support from federal or state grant programs: has this project been submitted for funding to a Federal or State grant program other than the RFSI and/or is a Federal or State grant program other than the RFSI funding the project currently? If yes, please explain.

- External project support: describe the stakeholders who support the need for this project and why (other than the applicant and organizations involved in the project)
- Distressed Communities Index: Using the [Distressed Communities Index Map](#), search by county in the top left corner, and provide the community distress score for the county/counties benefiting from your project (do not search by zip code). Note that this is for USDA data gathering and will not affect your eligibility or review score.
- Expected performance measures: Provide expected numbers or include “0” if not applicable.
 - Outcome: Capacity in the middle of the supply chain for local/regional food products
 - Number of new facilities constructed:
 - Number of existing facilities improved or expanded:
 - Number of processing equipment units purchased and installed:
 - Number of processing equipment units modernized through upgrades, repairs, or retooling:
 - Number of aggregation, storage, distribution equipment units purchased and installed:
 - Number of aggregation, storage, distribution equipment units modernized through upgrades, repairs, or retooling:
 - Number of employees trained on new equipment and processes:
 - Number of employees that received food safety training:
 - Number of employees that received worker safety training:
 - Number of new or improved information technology systems:
 - Outcome: Increase economic viability of local/regional producers and processors
 - Number of new jobs created:
 - Number of local/regional agricultural producers who benefited from the new or improved processing/aggregation/storage or distribution capacity:
 - Number of new local/regional products processed, aggregated, stored or distributed:
 - Number of new value-added products developed:
 - Number of new market-outlets established:

Budget

Applicants will need to provide an overall budget summary, as well as detailed expense breakdown and justification for each line item.

Budget Summary Table: The budget must show the total cost for the project and describe how category costs listed in the budget are derived. The budget justification for each section must provide enough detail to easily understand how costs were determined and how they relate to the Project Objectives and Expected Outcomes. The

budget must show a relationship between work planned and performed to the costs incurred. Please be sure to list and justify all expenses to be covered with matching funds separately and where they will be coming from.

Expense Category	Funds Requested	Applicant Contribution - Cash Match	Applicant Contribution - In-kind Match	Details/Purpose
Personnel	\$0.00	\$0.00	\$0.00	
Fringe Benefits	\$0.00	\$0.00	\$0.00	
Travel	\$0.00	\$0.00	\$0.00	
Equipment	\$0.00	\$0.00	\$0.00	
Supplies	\$0.00	\$0.00	\$0.00	
Construction	\$0.00	\$0.00	\$0.00	
Contractual	\$0.00	\$0.00	\$0.00	
Other	\$0.00	\$0.00	\$0.00	
Indirect Costs	\$0.00	\$0.00	\$0.00	
Total Budget	\$0.00	\$0.00	\$0.00	

Personnel: List the personnel whose time and effort can be specifically identified and easily and accurately traced to RFSI grant activities.

Personnel Name/Title	Level of Effort (# of hours OR % FTE)	Funds Requested	Applicant Contribution – Cash Match	Applicant Contribution – In-Kind Match
Personnel #1		\$0.00	\$0.00	\$0.00
[can add more lines as needed]		\$0.00	\$0.00	\$0.00
Personnel Sub-Total		\$0.00	\$0.00	\$0.00

Personnel Justification Narrative: For each individual listed in the above table, describe the activities to be completed by name/title including approximately when activities will occur. For example:

- Personnel #1: Description and justification
- Personnel #2: Description and justification

Fringe Benefits: Provide the fringe benefit rates for each of the project's employees described in the Personnel section that will be paid with RFSI funds.

Fringe Benefits Name/Title	Fringe Benefit Rate	Funds Requested	Applicant Contribution – Cash Match	Applicant Contribution – In-Kind Match
Fringe Benefit #1		\$0.00	\$0.00	\$0.00
[can add more lines as needed]		\$0.00	\$0.00	\$0.00
Fringe Sub-Total		\$0.00	\$0.00	\$0.00

Travel: Explain the purpose for each Trip Request. Please note that travel costs are limited to those allowed by formal organizational policy; in the case of air travel, project participants must use the lowest reasonable commercial airfares. For recipient organizations that have no formal travel policy and for-profit recipients, allowable travel costs may not exceed those established by the Federal Travel Regulation, issued by GSA, including the maximum per diem and subsistence rates prescribed in those regulations. This information is available at <http://www.gsa.gov>.

Trip Destination	Type of Expense (i.e. airfare, car rental, hotel, etc.)	Unit of Measure (i.e. days, nights, miles)	# of Units	Cost per Unit	# of Travelers Claiming Expense	Funds Requested	Applicant Contribution – Cash Match	Applicant Contribution – In-Kind Match
Travel #1						\$0.00	\$0.00	\$0.00
[can add more lines as needed]						\$0.00	\$0.00	\$0.00
Travel Sub-Total						\$0.00	\$0.00	\$0.00

Travel Justification Narrative: For each trip listed in the above table, describe the purpose of this trip and how it will achieve the objectives and outcomes of the project. Be sure to include approximately when the trip will occur.

For example:

- Trip #1: (Approximate Date of Travel MM/YYYY), justification
- Trip #2: (Approximate Date of Travel MM/YYYY), justification

Certification of Conforming with your Travel Policy:

By checking the box, I confirm that my organization's established travel policies will be adhered to when completing the above-mentioned trips in accordance with [2 CFR 200.474](#) or [48 CFR subpart 31.2](#) as applicable.

Equipment: Describe any special purpose equipment to be purchased or rented under the award. "Special purpose equipment" is tangible, nonexpendable, personal property having a useful life of more than one year and an acquisition cost that equals or exceeds \$5,000 per unit and is used only for research, medical, scientific, or other technical activities.

Rental of "general purpose equipment" must also be described in this section. Purchase of general-purpose equipment is not allowable under this award.

Equipment Item Description	Rental or Purchase	Acquisition Date	Funds Requested	Applicant Contribution – Cash Match	Applicant Contribution – In-Kind Match
Equipment #1			\$0.00	\$0.00	\$0.00
[can add more lines as needed]			\$0.00	\$0.00	\$0.00
Equipment Sub-Total			\$0.00	\$0.00	\$0.00

Equipment Justification Narrative: For each Equipment item listed in the above table describe how this equipment will be used to achieve the objectives and outcomes of the project. For example:

- Equipment #1: Description and justification
- Equipment #2: Description and justification

Supplies: List the materials, supplies, and fabricated parts costing less than \$5,000 per unit and describe how they will support the purpose and goal of the proposal and enhance the mid-supply chain and infrastructure efforts of RFSI.

Supplies Item Description	Cost per Unit	Number of Units	Acquisition Date	Funds Requested	Applicant Contribution – Cash Match	Applicant Contribution – In-Kind Match
Supplies #1				\$0.00	\$0.00	\$0.00
[can add more lines as needed]				\$0.00	\$0.00	\$0.00
Supplies Sub-Total				\$0.00	\$0.00	\$0.00

Supplies Justification Narrative: Describe the purpose of each supply listed in the table above purchased and how it is necessary for the completion of the project's objective(s) and outcome(s). For example:

- Supply #1: Description and justification
- Supply #2: Description and justification

Construction: Describe costs including administrative and legal expenses, structures, relocation expenses and payments, architectural and engineering fees, project inspection fees, site work, demolition and removal, construction, and miscellaneous expenses related to modernizing or expanding a new or existing facility.

Description	Acquisition Date	Funds Requested	Applicant Contribution – Cash Match	Applicant Contribution – In-Kind Match
Construction #1		\$0.00	\$0.00	\$0.00
[can add more lines as needed]		\$0.00	\$0.00	\$0.00
Construction Sub-Total		\$0.00	\$0.00	\$0.00

Construction Justification Narrative: Describe the need for construction costs. For projects involving construction, include any design and construction documents. If you are selected for funding, the grantee will be required to follow all applicable federal regulations regarding the construction activities. For example:

- Construction #1: Description and justification
- Construction #2: Description and justification

Contractual/Consultant: Provide a list of contractors/consultants, detailing out the name, hourly/flat rate, and overall cost of the services performed. Please note that any statutory limitations on indirect costs also apply to contractors and consultants.

Contractual Name/Organization	Hourly Rate/Flat Rate	Funds Requested	Applicant Contribution – Cash Match	Applicant Contribution – In-Kind Match
Contractual #1		\$0.00	\$0.00	\$0.00
[can add more lines as needed]		\$0.00	\$0.00	\$0.00
Contractual Sub-Total		\$0.00	\$0.00	\$0.00

Contractual/Consultant Justification Narrative: Provide for each of your real or anticipated contractors listed above a description of the project activities each will accomplish to meet the objectives and outcomes of the project. Each section should also include a justification for why contractual/consultant services are to be used to meet the anticipated outcomes and objectives. Include timelines for each activity. If contractor employee and consultant hourly rates of pay exceed the salary of a GS-15 step 10 Federal employee in your area, provide a justification for the expenses. This limit does not include fringe benefits, travel, indirect costs, or other expenses. For example:

- Contractual/Consultant #1: Description and justification
- Contractual/Consultant #2: Description and justification

Conforming with your Procurement Standards: By checking the box, I confirm that my organization followed the same policies and procedures used for procurements from non-federal sources, which reflect applicable State and local laws and regulations and conform to the Federal laws and standards identified in [2 CFR Part 200.317 through.326](#), as applicable. If the contractor(s)/consultant(s) are not already selected, my organization will follow the same requirements.

Other: Include any expenses not covered in any of the previous budget categories. Be sure to break down costs into cost/unit. Expenses in this section include, but are not limited to, meetings and conferences, communications, rental expenses, advertisements, publication costs, and data collection. If you budget meal costs for reasons other than meals associated with travel per diem, provide an adequate justification to support that these costs are not entertainment costs.

Other Item Description	Cost per Unit	Number of Units	Acquisition Date	Funds Requested	Applicant Contribution – Cash Match	Applicant Contribution – In-Kind Match
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Other #1				\$0.00	\$0.00	\$0.00
[can add more lines as needed]				\$0.00	\$0.00	\$0.00
Other Sub-Total				\$0.00	\$0.00	\$0.00

Other Justification Narrative: Describe the purpose of each item listed in the table above and how it is necessary for the completion of the project's objective(s) and outcome(s). For example:

- Other #1: Description and justification
- Other #2: Description and justification

Indirect Costs:

Indirect costs are any costs that are incurred for common or joint objectives that therefore, cannot be readily identified with an individual project, program, or organizational activity. They generally include facilities operation and maintenance costs, depreciation, and administrative expenses. If an applicant has a NICRA, they are required to use this amount, and a copy of the NICRA must be submitted with the application. Otherwise, applicants may elect to charge a de minimis rate of 10 percent of modified total direct costs (MTDC).

Indirect Cost Rate	Funds Requested	Applicant Contribution – Cash Match	Applicant Contribution – In-Kind Match
	\$0.00	\$0.00	\$0.00
Indirect Sub-Total	\$0.00	\$0.00	\$0.00

Self-certification for Graduated Match: All eligible entities must provide a 50% match OR a 25% graduated match of the total project cost. Applicants must submit written and signed verification of match commitment from any party, including the eligible applicant, who will contribute a match of non-Federal resources to this project.

To qualify for the 25% graduated match, the applicant must meet the definition of one of the following groups and mark which definition they meet:

- Beginning Farmer or Rancher
- Veteran Farmer or Rancher
- Limited Resource Farmer or Rancher

Additionally, by checking this box, applicant certifies that my entity qualifies for the graduated match reduction of 25%.

Supporting Documentation

There will be space to upload supporting documentations, including Match Verification Letters (example [here](#)), Evidence of Critical Resources and Infrastructure Letter(example [here](#)), the NEPA Applicant Questionnaire (fillable PDF [here](#)), and NICRA, if applicable.

There will be optional space to upload a business plan, strategic plan, business financials, or other supporting documentation that would be beneficial to understanding the viability of the project.

SECTION 3: APPLICATION REVIEW & SCORING

APPLICATION REVIEW

The grant manager will conduct an initial eligibility review which includes ensuring:

- The application is being submitted by an eligible applicant;
- The project is for eligible activities;
- The budget includes the appropriate match;
- The budget includes eligible expenses; and
- The application is complete.

Once initial screening is complete, three reviewers will be assigned to all eligible applications who will provide scores based on the criteria below. Reviewers may include VAAFM staff, community stakeholders, industry experts, and nonprofit partners that are involved in middle of the supply chain activities in Vermont and/or regionally. VAAFM staff will conduct at least one review meeting to make final recommendations on which applications to submit for VAAFM leadership approval. These recommendations will strive for equity in terms of project size and scope, geographic location, project type, impact, and similar considerations.

Please note that if an applicant has been awarded a large state or federal grant administered by VAAFM recently, especially in the current fiscal year (as of July 1, 2023), you may be less competitive for this funding.

Finally, VAAFM will send recommended applications to USDA for final review. Please note that USDA retains the right to provide final approval or request changes to scope or budget for all RFSI grant project.

APPLICATION SCORING

The following criteria will be used to score applications:

Project impact and expected outcomes: Applicant clearly demonstrates how the proposed project aligns with RFSI's goals of resiliency in the middle of the supply chain

and supporting market development. The proposal demonstrates that there is a credible need for the specified project. Proposed outcomes are relevant to the project, are explained clearly in the proposal, are significant according to the scale of the business, and are realistically achievable within the project period. **(25 points)**

Project readiness, timeline, and technical expertise: The applicant illustrates their ability and capacity to implement the project. The proposed activities in the workplan are clear, can be conducted within the grant period, and represent a strategic and thoughtful approach to identified business needs. The applicant outlines any areas of the project requiring technical expertise, any regulatory permit requirements that may influence the timeline, and what service providers will support these needs. There is no concern about the applicant's ability to complete their project efficiently and effectively within the grant period. **(20 points)**

Community impact and project beneficiaries: Applicant demonstrates that their project will have meaningful and significant impact on local and regional communities and businesses. Project beneficiaries are clearly identified and include those who have had difficulty accessing markets, specifically veteran farmers/producers, limited resource farmers/producers, and new and beginning farmers or producers. **(20 points)**

Budget: The proposed budget is detailed, clear, and reflects realistic, well-planned components. Budget narrative supports and further details items in budget table. Where necessary, quotes for equipment or contracted work are provided to support the proposed budget. The budget reflects a thorough and well-researched effort documenting the true costs of the project. All match verification letters are submitted and complete. **(15 points)**

Business Viability and Financial Management: The applicant possesses characteristics of a viable business or business model, including diverse markets, partnerships, and systems for internal management. The grant request is commensurate with their business size. The application proves how this investment and project aligns with the long-term business model and viability. **(10 points)**

Letters of Support and Commitment: The applicant's letters provide convincing evidence of the potential impact of this project, offer context to their project readiness, and outline positive impact on the community and other businesses along the supply chain. **(10 points)**

Reviewers will also submit a holistic application score and include strengths, weaknesses, and other comments associated with the proposal.

SECTION 4: GRANT MANAGEMENT & REPORTING

GRANT AGREEMENT & PAYMENT

Prior to receiving funding, successful applicants must sign a grant agreement with the Vermont Agency of Agriculture, Food & Markets (VAAFAM) indicating their intent to complete the proposed project and authorizing VAAFAM to monitor 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 for Contracts and Grants](#) (revised 12/7/2023) for the most recent State provisions.

There may be additional reporting or other terms set forth by USDA. Grantees may be asked to attend regional collaborations, including an in-person gathering for all Northeast RFSI awardees. All relevant details and stipulations will be included in the grant agreement.

Prior to commencement of work and release of grant payment, grantees must submit:

1. A current [IRS Form W-9](#) (Request for Taxpayer Identification Number and Certification), signed within the past six months;
2. A certificate of insurance consistent with the requirements set forth in Attachment C of the grant agreement (not required if grantee already has a current certificate of insurance on file with VAAFAM);
3. Documentation that verifies pledged matching funds, as applicable.

GRANTEE PAYMENT SCHEDULE

Except for the first payment following grant agreement signing, grant payments are based upon project performance and completion of project activities. Progress will be communicated via status reports, which must be approved by the State grant program manager before claims (payment requests) are approved. All status reports and claims will be submitted and approved via WebGrants at agriculturegrants.vermont.gov.

Grant funds are distributed according to the following schedule:

1. Up to 40% of the grant award following signing of the grant agreement, plus submission and approval of an initial claim;
2. Up to an additional 40 (or up to 80% total) of the grant award at the mid-point of the project, following completion and approval of the Interim Report demonstrating project progress, and a second claim;
3. Final 20% (or other remaining amount) of the grant award, following submission and approval of the Final Report demonstrating project completion and satisfactory achievement of expected measurable outcomes, and a final claim.

Grantees must maintain documentation of project costs, both those paid with grant funds and with matching funds, throughout the grant period. Accurate expense totals are a required component of status reporting.

REPORTING REQUIREMENTS

Prior to receipt of the second and third grant payments, respectively, grant recipients must complete an Interim Report and Final Report in [WebGrants](#). Reports will include questions such as a narrative of project accomplishments to date, progress toward meeting expected goals and outcomes, a budget table showing amounts of expended grant and matching funds, and photos that demonstrate project work.

Grantees must be willing to share project details, including successes and challenges, with the public and the media, which illustrate the impact of the grant within Vermont's working lands economies. This may occur through media inquiries, press events on location, and/or site visits from VAAF staff. USDA may also include other reporting requirements or request for project information and success stories.

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](#)

APPENDIX A: DEFINITIONS

Beginning Farmer or Rancher: An individual or applicant that has not operated a farm or ranch for more than 10 years and substantially participates in the operation.

Cooperatives: A business or service organization (1) that is owned and democratically controlled by the people who use its services and (2) whose benefits (services received and earnings allocations) are distributed to the user-owners based on how much they use the cooperative.

Critical Resources: Critical resources and infrastructure can be facilities, land, structure, use of city street/parks, shared-used kitchen, and/or other resources that are essential for the proposed project activities.

Domestically Owned: An applicant organized in the United States under the law of the State, the states, or under Tribal jurisdiction where the applicant operates, and a majority of the applicant is owned by US citizens.

Hazard Analysis and Critical Control Points (HACCP): HACCP provides a framework for establishments to conduct science-based process controls that can be validated as effective in eliminating, preventing, or reducing to an acceptable level the food safety hazards that are reasonably likely to occur in an official establishment's particular production processes.

Infrastructure Grant: An Infrastructure Grant is a subaward that will fund projects to expand capacity and infrastructure for the aggregation, processing, manufacturing, storing, transporting, wholesaling, or distribution of targeted agricultural products.

Intermediaries: Includes aggregators, distributors, food hubs, brokers, auction houses, and wholesale.

Limited Resource Farmer or Producer: Someone:

- With direct or indirect gross farm sales not more than the current indexed value in each of the previous two years, and
- Who has a total household income at or below the national poverty level for a family of four, or less than 50 percent of county median household income in each of the previous two years.
- A Self-Determination Tool is available here:
<https://lrftool.sc.egov.usda.gov/DeterminationTool.aspx?fyYear=2024>

Local and Regional Food: Agricultural products where the distance between product origin and point of sale is at most 400 miles, or both the final market and the product origin are within the same State, US territory, or Tribal land.

Mid-Size Producers: USDA defines small family farms as those with a Gross Cash Farm Income (GCFI) of less than \$350,000; mid-size farms have a GCFI of \$350,000 to \$999,999.

Middle-of-the-Supply-Chain: The food supply chain involves the following stages: 1. Production, 2. Processing, 3. Aggregation/Distribution, and 4. Markets/Consumers. For the purposes of RFSI, “middle-of-the-supply-chain” refers to the middle stages: 2. Processing and 3. Aggregation/Distribution.

Nonprofit Corporations: Any organization or institution, including nonprofits with State or IRS 501 (c) status and accredited institutions of higher education, where no part of the organization or institution’s net earnings inure to the benefit of any private shareholder or individual.

Retail: Includes businesses such supermarkets, restaurants and caterers, and direct and other to retail markets (food cooperatives, small independent grocers, corner stores).

Value-Added Agricultural Product: means any agricultural commodity or product that:

- Has undergone a change in the physical state or form of the product, such as milling wheat into flour or making strawberries into jam.
- Is produced in a manner that enhances the value of the agricultural commodity or product.
- Is physically segregated in a manner that results in the enhancement of the value of that commodity or product, such as an identity preserved product.
- Is a source of farm- or ranch-based renewable energy, including E-85 fuel; or
- Is aggregated and marketed as a locally produced agricultural food product and, as a result of the change in physical state or the manner in which the agricultural commodity or product is produced and segregated, the customer base for the commodity or product is expanded and a greater portion of revenue derived from the marketing, processing, or physical segregation is made available to the producer of the commodity or product.

Veteran Farmer or Rancher: is a producer who served in the United States Army, Navy, Marine Corps, Air Force, or Coast Guard, including the reserve component thereof, was released from service under conditions other than dishonorable, and has not operated a farm or ranch or has operated a farm or ranch for no more than 10 years or who first obtained status as a veteran during the most recent 10- year period.