
New Hampshire

*Department of Agriculture,
Markets, and Food*



Resilient Food Systems Infrastructure Program

Infrastructure Grant Application Manual

1. Grant Summary

1.1 Overview

The purpose of New Hampshire's Resilient Food Systems Infrastructure Program (RFSI) is to build resilience in the middle-of-the-supply-chain in the Granite State and strengthen our local and regional food systems through the creation of new revenue streams in the areas of aggregation, processing, manufacturing, storing, transporting, wholesaling, or distribution of local agricultural products.

The Infrastructure Grants intends to benefit NH farms and food businesses with the goal of expanding capacity for processing, aggregation, and distribution of agricultural products to create more and better markets for producers; filling gaps in cold storage, transportation, and distribution for farms, food processors, and food hubs; increase access to cooperative commercial kitchens and/or other value-added product producing facilities; and increase processing for new products; increase branding and food safety through packing and labelling.

Projects will begin no earlier than July 1, 2024 and must be completed by May 24, 2027.

1.2 Funding availability

RFSI Infrastructure Grants will award up to \$1,000,000 through a competitive review process. The maximum individual grant award will be \$250,000 and the minimum will be \$100,000. There will be one round of funding for Infrastructure Grants. Matching funds will be required; see Matching Funds section below for further details.

1.3 How to apply

All applications must be electronically submitted by **4:00 pm on April 12, 2024** using the application template provided [here](#).

Additionally, four (4) printed copies of the application must be received in our office no later than 4:00 pm on April 15, 2024.

Mail to:
RFSI
NH Dept. of Agriculture, Markets & Food

PO Box 2042
Concord, NH 03302-2042

Or deliver to:
RFSI
NH Dept. of Agriculture, Markets & Food
25 Capitol St. (Second Floor)
Concord, NH 03301

2. Grant Eligibility

To be eligible for funding, applicants and projects must meet the following minimum requirements:

2.1 Eligible Grant Projects

RFSI is intended to serve middle-of-the-supply-chain needs to add value and provide more, new, and better markets for locally or regionally produced food. This program is to support food system crops and products meant for human consumption (excluding meat and poultry products, which are funded through other USDA programs). Infrastructure Grants will fund projects that expand capacity and infrastructure for the aggregation, processing, manufacturing, storing, transporting, wholesaling, or distribution of targeted agricultural products. Examples include:

- Expanding processing capacities, including adding product types, increasing production volumes, and supporting new wholesale/retail product lines.
- Modernizing equipment or facilities through upgrades, repairs, or retooling; (e.g., adapting product lines for institutional procurement or adding parallel processing capacity).
- Purchase and installation of specialized equipment, such as processing components, sorting equipment, packing and labeling equipment, or delivery vehicles.
- Modernizing manufacturing, tracking, storage, and information technology systems.
- Enhancing worker safety through adoption of new technologies or investment in equipment or facility improvements.
- 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; and
- Training on the use of all equipment purchased under the grant and associated new processes.

2.2 Eligible Entities

Entities eligible for RFSI Grants are:

- Agricultural producers or processors, or groups of agricultural producers and processors.
- Nonprofit organizations operating middle-of-the-supply-chain activities such as processing, aggregation, distribution of targeted agricultural products.
- For-profit entities operating middle of the supply chain activities such as processing, aggregation, or distribution of targeted agricultural products, whose activities are primarily focused for the benefit of local and regional producers, and that meet the eligibility requirements of the SBA small business size standards. *
- Local government entities operating middle-of-the-supply-chain activities such as processing, aggregation, distribution of targeted agricultural products.
- Tribal governments operating middle-of-the-supply-chain activities such as processing, aggregation, distribution of targeted agricultural products.
- Institutions such as schools, universities, or hospitals bringing producers together to establish cooperative or shared infrastructure or invest in equipment that will benefit multiple producers middle-of-the-supply-chain activities such as processing, aggregation, distribution of targeted agricultural product.

* For-profit entities must meet the eligibility requirements of the SBA small business size standards matched to industries described in the North American Industry Classification System (NAICS). For more information on these size standards, please visit SBA's Size Standards website. For a quick check on whether your business qualifies, please use the Size Standards Tool. All applicant businesses and organizations must be domestically owned, and applicants' facilities must be physically located in New Hampshire. Applicants doing business along the state's border or have locations in multiple states should only apply in one state to avoid duplication of federal funds. The USDA defines the middle of the food supply chain as activities that take place after the production of the agricultural product but before the product is sold to consumers. These activities include the processing, aggregation, and distribution of agricultural products between leaving the field and entering the marketplace. Therefore, grant funds cannot be used for cultivation, harvest, or retail marketing of eligible food products.

2.3 Eligible Activities

The following activities or tasks are eligible for funding:

- Hiring term-limited personnel to assist with project implementation activities.
- Purchasing special purpose equipment: defined in section 8.2 of the AMS General Terms and Conditions. This includes the purchase of special purpose equipment for institutions or others that will benefit multiple producers through middle-of-the-supply-chain activities such as processing, aggregation, distribution of targeted agricultural product.

- 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; and
- 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 o 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; and
 - Cooking, baking, juicing, distilling, fermenting

2.4 Activities Not Eligible for Funding

The following activities are not eligible for funding:

- Acquiring real property (including land purchases), or any interest therein.
- Projects focused on meat and poultry processing, wild-caught seafood, exclusively animal feed and forage products, fiber, landscaping products, tobacco, or dietary supplements.
- Activities that have received a Federal award from another Federal award program for the same activity or equipment.
- Claiming expenses that have been or will be reimbursed under any Federal, State, or local government funding; and
- Projects which have already received funding from another federal grant or subaward programs may not receive funding for the same activities through an Infrastructure Grant. However, Infrastructure Grants may build on the successes of prior funding, such as the USDA Regional Food Business Centers Business Builder subawards, to fund subsequent activities.

3. Matching Funds

3.1 Matching Funds Requirement

Infrastructure grant recipients are required to contribute 50% of the total proposed project cost as a match to federal funding. This applies to all applicants except those who qualify for the reduced match described in the next section.

3.2 Reduced Matching Funds – Historically Underserved Groups

For [historically underserved farmers and ranchers](#), or for other businesses that qualify under [SBA categories](#) of small disadvantaged business, women-owned small business, or veteran-owned small

business, the required match funding contribution or cost share is reduced to 25% of the project cost. States must require that applicants self-certify in their Infrastructure Grant applications to being eligible for this reduced match.

3.3 Other Matching Fund Information

In-kind contributions are defined, when used as a cost share or match for a grant, as the value of goods or services provided for the benefit of the grant program, where no funds transferred hands. For example, a partner, such as a tribal community member, may volunteer their professional expertise as a match contribution to the project as described in [2 C.F.R. § 200.306\(e\)](#). These contributions cannot satisfy a cost sharing or matching requirement for this grant program if they are used toward satisfying a match requirement under any other Federal grant agreement to which the applicant is a party. All matching contributions must be committed or secured at the time an applicant is recommended for an award. Indirect costs may count toward the Infrastructure Grant applicant's match. Refer to section [4.2 in the USDA RFSI Program Scope and Requirements, Indirect](#) for more information. Program income (as defined in [2 C.F.R. § 200.1](#)) or any other Federal funds is an ineligible source of match or cost share.

3.4 Matching Funds Letters of Verification

Each application must include the total amount of match and how it will specifically align with their requested funding. Additionally, applicants must submit one match verification letter for each cash or in-kind resource signed by the matching organization. A template for the Match Verification Letter can be downloaded from DAMF's website. Signed Match Verification Letters must accompany the Infrastructure Grant proposal at the time of application.

3.5 Evidence of Critical Infrastructure

Evidence of Critical Infrastructure is required if critical resources and/or infrastructure are necessary for the completion of the proposed grant project. Applicants must submit evidence that critical resources and infrastructure necessary to support the initiation and completion of a project are in place. 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. 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 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. A template for the Evidence of Critical Resources and Infrastructure can be downloaded from DAMF'S website.

4. Application Review Process

4.1 Review Process

All eligible applications will be reviewed by a diverse selection committee which may include DAMF staff. Recipients will be chosen on the merits of the project as put forth in the application. Selection will be determined as funding allows, based on how well the application meets the following:

Applications will be scored using a prepared score sheet that assigns points to various categories as follows, with a maximum score of 100 points:

<u>Score sheet</u>	<u>Max points</u>
Project Purpose	30
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • How well does the applicant define the specific and existing issue, problem, or need the project will address? • Will the project provide a direct benefit to more than one NH food producer by creating a new revenue stream for multiple producers or increasing the capacity of existing revenue streams for multiple producers? 	
Objectives	15
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Does the project address one or more of the priorities identified through DAMF outreach: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Gaps in cold storage, transportation and distribution for aggregators like farms, food processors, and food hubs. ○ Cooperative commercial kitchens and/or other value-added product producing facilities. ○ Light processing, culinary grain processing, and/or organic dairy processing. ○ Packaging and labeling equipment. ○ Food waste composting. 	
Project Beneficiaries	15
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Does the project benefit one or more of the following: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Underserved farmers and ranchers; ○ New and beginning farmers or ranchers; ○ Veteran producers; ○ Small business in underserved community; ○ Small and medium-sized enterprises that add options for consumer and producers; ○ Cooperatives, farmer-, and worker-owned enterprises; ○ Opportunity for family-supporting job quality and treatment/safety of workers; ○ Job creation; ○ Community impact. 	
Expected Performance Measures	15
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Did the applicant provide one of the predetermined indicators listed under the identified Outcome 2 or Outcome 3? • Did the applicant provide the quantifiable results for the indicator selected? 	
Budget Narrative	25
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Is the budget reasonable and consistent with the project's purpose, outcome, and indicator? 	

- Is it feasible that the proposed work can be accomplished in three years?
- Is it clearly identified and reasonable how the match will be met?
- Is signed verification of match commitment provided?
- Does the applicant demonstrate financial viability?

Awards will be made within the constraint of available funds; consequently, awards may not be made to all qualifying proposals. In addition, DAMF reserves the right to make partial awards and/or award grants to lower-ranked proposal(s) if there are insufficient funds remaining to award the amount requested in a higher-ranked proposal. Top ranking applications may be required to come before the review committee to give a presentation on their proposal to assist in making their final decision on funding recommendations.

The Commissioner of DAMF will review the committee recommendations and be responsible for final approval before approved applications are submitted to USDA. All awards must complete and submit grant agreements to DAMF for the Governor and Executive Council for approval before beginning.

4.2 Rights of the Agency in Accepting and Evaluating Proposals

DAMF reserves the right to:

- Make independent investigation in evaluating proposals;
- Request additional information to clarify elements of a proposal;
- Waive minor or immaterial deviations from the RFP requirements, if determined to be in the best interest of the State;
- Omit any planned evaluation step if, in the agency's view, the step is not needed; and
- At its sole discretion, reject any and all proposals at any time

5. Disbursement of Funds

Award recipients will be required to sign an official State of New Hampshire agreement with DAMF indicating their commitment and responsibilities toward completing their RFSI project in a manner consistent with State of New Hampshire policies and all applicable state and federal laws and regulations. Recipient businesses must be registered as a vendor with the NH Secretary of State before final approval can take place. DAMF is authorized to view all project details and documentation to certify the project as complete.

6. Reporting

Award recipients will be required to submit reports twice a year for the duration of the project and a final report upon completion of the project. DAMF or its designee(s) reserves the right to perform site monitoring visits to any and all awardees to ensure that work is progressing within the required time frame and that fiscal procedures are being followed accurately and appropriately. Monitoring includes both financial and program information as well as site visits.

7. Other Requirements

7.1 National Environmental Policy Act (NEPA)

All activities funded under this RFA must comply with the National Environmental Policy Act (NEPA) and related applicable agency regulations and instructions, Section 106 of the National Historic Preservation Act (NHPA), the Endangered Species Act (ESA), other laws and regulations as outlined therein, and any applicable state, local, or tribal laws. A review for NEPA compliance is required prior to the award of grant funds. If selected for an award, applicants must provide all requested information to support compliance with NEPA, NHPA, ESA, and all other federal environmental laws and regulations.

7.2 Build America, Buy America (BABA)

Any public infrastructure project funded under RFSI must coordinate with AMS to ensure adherence to BABA guidance. For such projects, the recipient must comply with the Buy America Sourcing requirements outlined in the Build America, Buy America (BABA) provisions of the [Infrastructure Investment and Jobs Act](#).

For-Profit Entities: BABA is *not applicable to for-profit entities* (either prime or subrecipient) particularly for infrastructure projects. AMS will review facilities owned by public entities to determine whether BABA requirements apply, following USDA guidance to exempt *de minimis* grant awards and other inapplicable activities. All other Infrastructure Grant entities that surpass the \$250,000 threshold of applicable procurement costs must adhere to BABA.

Small Grants Waiver: The small grants waiver will apply to awards with total federal funding below the Simplified Acquisition Threshold, which is currently set at \$250,000. BABA is not applicable to Equipment Only Grants as they do not surpass this threshold of \$250,000.

Resource: 2 CFR Part 184 - BUY AMERICA PREFERENCES FOR INFRASTRUCTURE PROJECTS: <https://www.ecfr.gov/current/title-2/part-184>

7.3 UEI-SAM.gov

All recipients of RFSI funds must have a Unique Entity Identifier number (UEI) in SAM.Gov. There is NO cost to register in SAM.gov.

8. Terms and Conditions

8.1 Amendment or cancellation of RFP

This RFP does not constitute an offer. DAMF reserves the right to amend or cancel this RFP at any time.

8.2 Public disclosure

By submitting a proposal, the proposer acknowledges that DAMF is subject to the Right-to-Know Law, RSA Chapter 91-A. Accordingly, information submitted as part of a proposal may be subject to public disclosure unless otherwise exempt. Information relating to grant applications or proposals shall remain confidential until the grant agreement is approved by the Governor and Executive Council, or, if the grant contract does not require approval from the Governor and Executive Council, until the effective date of the grant agreement. RSA 91-A; RSA 21- G:37, VII.

Business financial information, confidential information, such as personally identifiable information, proprietary information such as trade secrets, financial models and forecasts, and proprietary formulas,

are categories of information that may be exempt from public disclosure. RSA 91-A:5, IV. If any part of its proposal contains information that a proposer asserts is exempt from public disclosure, the proposer must specifically identify all relevant text as confidential.

8.3 Grant terms and award

Any grant awarded as a result of this RFP process is contingent upon approval of the agreement by Governor and Executive Council of the State of New Hampshire upon continued appropriation of funding. Subsequent amendments to the grant agreement are subject to approval by DAMF and the Governor and Executive Council.