

Growth Through Agriculture (GTA) Frequently Asked Questions (FAQs)

1) Where do we find information on what costs are allowable?

This information is available in the Growth Through Agriculture (GTA) Program Guidelines document available on <https://agr.mt.gov/GTA>. A list of eligible and ineligible costs are listed in the first few pages of the document.

2) How do I add a FADC/SBDC or other technical assistance staff to be able to review my application online? Applicants or their Food and Agriculture Development Center / economic development professional can request to be added to have access to the application. If the Food & Ag Center / economic development person sends the email, they should copy the applicant on the email request.

- Once the email is received, GTA staff will add the requested person to the applicant organization on funding.mt.gov. Once that is complete, GTA staff will send the applicant and the economic development person a confirmation email.
- Final Step – The applicant, will need to log into funding.mt.gov and go to the General Information form of their application and click “Edit”, and then click on the name of the person to be added in the *Additional Contacts* field and “Save”. If an application has not been started yet, please follow the instructions in the Funding Opportunity to “Start an Application” and then after completing the Project Title, and other fields, click on the *Organization* name in the lowest drop down field of the form, “Save”. Then stay in this form, click “Edit” and click on the name of the person to be added in *Additional Contacts* and save again. If questions or technical issues, email gta@mt.gov.

3) Match – Match can be counted from December 7, 2019 (a year before application deadline)

- **Types and make up of match** – Please reference the program guidelines at <https://agr.mt.gov/GTA>. Below is a list of some examples of how match can be proposed. It is not all inclusive, but encompasses most of the ways that match could be requested.

Below is a list of possible scenarios:

- **Match Example #1** (Simplest) – Purchasing 1 piece of equipment after 12/7/2020 for \$50,000 – requesting \$25,000 GTA and \$25,000 matching funds to come from company
- **Match Example #2** – (all prior match)
 - 12/7/19 – 12/6/2020 – (before application deadline) Purchased \$25,000 worth of equipment and construction costs
 - AFTER 12/7/2020 - Purchasing equipment for \$25,000
- **Match Example #3** – 2 activities –
 - Purchasing Equipment piece #1 - \$25,000 – requesting GTA funds
 - Purchasing equipment piece #2 or other matching activities - \$25,000 – matching funds
 - Note – if purchasing item #1 first and then #2 later, GTA funds can only be reimbursed as matching funds are documented. \$12,500 would be able to be reimbursed until piece of equipment #2 is purchased and documentation

submitted to the Dept. then remaining \$12,500 would be able to be reimbursed.

- **Match Example #4** – Purchasing several items and activities – before and after 12/7/2020. \$50,000 total
 - \$12,500 **match** documented between 12/7/2019 – 12/6/2020 (**prior match**)
 - \$12,500 proposed future **match** after 12/7/2020
 - \$25,000 GTA funds requested for multiple activities after 12/7/2020
 - If funded, GTA funds would only be able to be reimbursed (that means that if funded, the grant funded activity would need to be paid for by the grant/loan recipient, and then invoice/receipts, etc would be submitted to the Dept. for reimbursement.
- 4) **What is the average award amount?** The average award amount for the last 3 years has been \$20,000 - \$35,000. Many of these awards were partially funded requests. A list of all the projects funded by year for the last several years if available on <https://agr.mt.gov/GTA>. Scroll to the very bottom of the page under Forms & Files.
- 5) **Will the Council consider partially funding a request?** Yes, the Agriculture Development Council reviews all proposals and can decide to fully fund, not to fund or to partially fund any proposal. For example, \$50,000 could be requested, but the Council may decide to fund \$25,000 or to fund just one or two of the activities proposed in the request.
- 6) **If I am awarded GTA funds, can GTA funds be reimbursed even though we haven't spent all our match?** No, however, GTA funds can be reimbursed based on 50% of the GTA documented expenses until such time as the eligible matching funds have been documented.
- 7) **If I am awarded funds, will I be sent a check right away?** No, GTA funds are only available on a reimbursement basis. If an applicant is successful in applying for funds, an award letter and then a contract will be sent for review and signature. Once the contract is signed by both parties, the successful award recipient can submit requests for reimbursement with the required receipts, invoices or other required documentation.
- 8) **Can I spend \$20,000 and then be cut a check for \$20,000 to buy equipment with the GTA funds?** No, GTA funds can only be distributed on a reimbursement basis. Applicants should plan with this requirement in mind to cashflow their project activities. Some applicants have spoken with a lender to get a line of credit available contingent upon a copy of a GTA award letter so that funds can be available to purchase equipment or pay for project activities and then request reimbursement from the GTA funding. Reimbursement typically takes 2-3 weeks, but during high volume times can take up to 30 days to process.
- 9) **What considerations do I need to make if I'm requesting GTA funds and have a bank or other lender involved that is also financing the project?** Keep in mind that GTA will require a personal guarantee as well as a security lien on equipment purchased with GRANT and LOAN funds. (Please note the personal guarantee and security sections of the application).
- Grant awards only have a security lien filed until final grant reporting is completed.

- Loan awards have a security lien in place until the loan is paid off. If you are requesting GTA funds for part of a purchase of equipment and a lender is financing the other half, please notify GTA staff to discuss possible security lien implications and options.

10) If I have prior matching costs after 12/7/2019, do I have to attach all the invoices for those matching costs to the application? Yes, it is highly recommended to attach the actual invoices or receipts for activities that are being requested to meet match requirements that have already been spent. An overview of prior matching costs is permissible, but note that if funded, successful recipients will be required to submit copies of all invoices, receipts and other documentation before reimbursement is provided. This has delayed several past funding recipients by several weeks as that information is gathered again several months later.

11) How soon can I get funds? Reimbursement Timing – Standard timing is 2-3 weeks for reimbursement requests. Award recipients are encouraged to submit requests for payment as soon as possible. If award recipients wait several weeks to submit claim for reimbursement, keep in mind that it will be at least 2-3 weeks after it is submitted before the Department will be able to review and complete the payment process. This is due to the volume of accounting requests the Department processes on a daily basis and the required steps of program and accounting approval required for the release of state funds. If paperwork is submitted to get set up for EFT, this can make payment receipt faster.

12) May we use staff at Montana Department of Agriculture (MDA) as a resource in preparing our grant application? (see answer to next question)

13) Will MDA staff review my application prior to submittal?

MDA staff involved in reviewing and managing Growth Through Agriculture (GTA) and may only provide responses to applicant's technical questions with application and process compliance. Involved staff include: GTA program manager, Agriculture Development and Marketing Bureau Chief, ADD Staff Attorney, MDA Deputy Director, and MDA Director.

MDA staff who are not involved in the making of GTA grants are an available resource to all potential applicants however, they are not available to participate in the writing of a proposal.

Applicants are encouraged to contact the Food and Agriculture Development Center Network (www.foodandag.mt.gov) the Small Business Development Center Network (www.sbdc.mt.gov) and/or their local economic development organization (<https://www.eda.gov/resources/economic-development-directory/states/mt.htm>) as resources in developing their GTA application.

14) Is there a scoring system for the program?

Yes. This is addressed in the program manual. The council gives one score of high, medium, or low. The areas of consideration are also listed in the grant manual.

15) Can we get a review of our grant before the deadline?

The deadline for an application completeness review is 11/30/2020 at 5PM. Applications received before this date will be reviewed by MDA staff to ensure only that all parts of the application and documentation have been received.

16) Is there an advantage to submitting proposals early?

The only advantage to submitting early is being eligible for the completeness review. See *question 15*.

17) Is there a difference in how grants and loans are reviewed?

No, they are reviewed through the same process.