

Food and Agriculture Development Program – Funding Opportunity

Deadline: May 1st – 5pm

www.foodandag.mt.gov

Phone: 406.444.5424

E-mail: a.townsend@mt.gov



**MONTANA
FOOD & AGRICULTURE
DEVELOPMENT
NETWORK**

Mission Statement

The mission of the Montana Department of Agriculture (MDA) is to serve Montana agriculture and grow prosperity under the Big Sky.

AUTHORIZATION AND ELIGIBLE ACTIVITIES

This program is authorized under the Montana Food and Agriculture Development Center (FADC) Program www.foodandag.mt.gov as established in MCA 80-11-901 and is overseen by the Agriculture Development Council (Council) as described in MCA 90-9-202.

The Montana Food and Agriculture Development Center Program (FADC) MCA 80-11-901 charges awarded Centers with:

- developing Montana's capacity to produce food and value-added agricultural products, including farm-derived renewable energy, commodity processing infrastructure, and emerging technologies intended to diversify, add value, or enhance economic growth opportunities for Montana's agricultural economy; and
- providing technical assistance and other services to community-based food, agriculture, technology, and farm-derived renewable energy entrepreneurs.
- Technical assistance includes but is not limited to business assistance, product development, marketing, nutritional analysis and labeling, education, assistance with food safety regulation compliance, training to educate business professionals and entrepreneurs on industry dynamics and technology of specific bioproduct industries and evaluating existing and developing technologies.
- Each center must be a nonprofit organization and shall coordinate with other state-funded programs in order to not duplicate state assistance.
- As used in this section, "farm-derived renewable energy" means renewable energy produced from products developed by farmers and ranchers, as well as entrepreneurs, using Montana farm and ranch products.

AVAILABLE FUNDS

Montana Department of Agriculture anticipates approximately \$1,100,000 for the two-year period of this grant. Application minimum request is \$25,000. There is no maximum request amount, but MDA

does plan to award multiple awards from these funds. Additional funds will be allocated, if available, should an award be approved for renewal beyond the initial two years of this opportunity.

ELIGIBLE APPLICANTS

Eligible entities must be registered as a non-profit organization and have documentation on file with the Montana Secretary of State’s office.

PERIOD OF SERVICES TO BE PROVIDED

Services will be performed from August 1, 2023 through July 31, 2025.

Critical Dates	Time*	Event	Venue
March 1, 2023	5:00 pm	Post Funding Opportunity	https://funding.mt.gov
April 14, 2023	2:00 pm	Technical Assistance Call	MS Teams Call**
May 1, 2023	5:00 pm	Application Deadline	https://funding.mt.gov
May 1 – June 15, 2023		Application Eligibility Review	
June, 2023		Agriculture Council Review Meeting	In Person and Zoom Call**
End of June, 2023		Expected award announcement of selected applications, nonaward notice	By Email

*All times in Mountain Standard Time

**Call information will be posted on the Food and Agriculture website: www.foodandag.mt.gov

APPLICATION MATERIALS

Applicants shall provide the following items in the application. If the contact person or organization is not registered on Webgrants yet, register at <https://funding.mt.gov> and contact the Grants Manager Aly Townsend at 406.444.5424 for approval on registration in the system.

Services to be Provided

1. Need for Services –

- List the counties that would be served by your proposal.
 - Please provide the number of clients served in each of the counties listed for the last two years. *“Clients served” is defined as a business/entity for which you have provided a service. Cold calling a business or sharing contact information only should not be considered a client served.*
- Describe the food and agriculture businesses and communities in that area, and what demographic groups would be served.
- Include data and/or estimates that describe the food and ag industries in the proposed area covered.
- Identify barriers to entry or other obstacles for food and ag businesses in the proposed area covered.
- Describe local participation and commitment to this proposal and other forms of community buy-in.

- Describe any emerging industries in your proposed region, the needs/challenges faced and potential for those industries.

2. **Approach** – Based on the needs defined in the counties you propose to serve, describe the services that will be provided by your organization in the following areas and how capacity will be added should funds be awarded:

- Innovative methodologies should be highlighted
- Partnerships with other organizations and stakeholders for a regional approach
- Business assistance
- Product development
- Marketing
- Nutritional analysis and labeling
- Education
- Assistance with regulatory compliance
- Training
- Identify growth opportunities
- Evaluation of existing technologies and developing technologies, and/or
- Other services that develop Montana’s capacity to produce food and value-added agricultural products.

***Please note that it is not expected that each applicant will provide services in all these areas.

3. **Outcomes / Measurement / Deliverables**

Objectives

- Provide a list of at least two trackable objectives to be completed during the grant period.
- Objectives should include quantifiable targets.

Examples include:

- Individuals trained
- Funding procured for businesses
- Technical Assistance provided
- New clients reached
- Training hours provided

Outcomes

- For each objective listed above, explain how it will impact the need(s) described in section 1.
- How will the individuals served increase their likelihood of success?
- How will outcomes be assessed? E.g.:
 - Change in knowledge
 - Did training attendees demonstrate an increase in knowledge?
 - Change in behavior
 - Did business owners implement a new practice to improve efficiency?
 - Change in condition
 - Did the business add the capacity to process Montana commodities or add jobs?
 - Was the business able to expand into new markets?

Deliverable Example:

Objective: Provide 50 hours of rural marketing training to farm and agriculture businesses.

Outcome: This objective addresses the lack of communication and outreach resources for rural Montana businesses. Training attendees will have an increased knowledge of rural marketing best practices as demonstrated in a post-training survey.

4. **Capacity and Expertise** – Describe your organization’s capacity and expertise to successfully perform the work proposed and achieve the outcomes described.

- Expertise and Partners
 - Briefly list key staff, including personnel and external project partners and collaborators that comprise the Project Team, their roles, and their relevant experience.
- Describe your organization’s knowledge base to support businesses in achieving or maintaining compliance with laws and regulations related to:
 - Land, lease, rail access issues addressed as applicable
 - Food safety and/or certification requirements (FSMA, HACCP, GAP, Etc.)
 - Feed and Fertilizer regulations
 - Meat processing regulations
 - Sanitarian guidelines for food service/producing establishments
 - Department of Environmental Quality regulations
 - Other regulatory programs applying to food and agriculture businesses
- Past Clients and successful projects
 - Describe 3 prior food and ag based clients and the services provided to that client by your organization. What was the result of your work with that client? If possible, provide examples of businesses at varying stages in their development. e.g., start-up, expansion, maturity.
 - Letters of recommendation cannot be accepted with the application, but quotes from assisted entities within the application are welcomed.

5. **Outreach Plan** – describe how you will promote services in the counties of the state targeted by your proposal to ensure that businesses/populations in need are reached. Describe any planned outreach collaboration with other organizations or stakeholders in Montana.

6. **Previous Successes** -If this project builds on a previously funded proposal:

- Provide a summary of the outcomes of the previous project(s).
- Were there lessons learned, and incorporated to make the ongoing project more effective and successful at meeting objectives and outcomes?
- Can the project be replicated in a collaborative method with other organizations?

7. **Budget**

Applicants should provide a **two-year budget** for their proposal with detailed information in the following areas:

Personnel

List the organization’s employees whose time and effort can be specifically identified and easily and accurately traced to project activities. This may include the ED, director of services, accountant, and others. For each employee who will be working on the FADC project complete the following:

- **Name/Title:** Provide the name and title of each employee directly charging time to the grant.
- **Level of Effort:** Provide the FTE or percent of time the employee will allocate to this project.
- **Funds Requested:** Provide the amount of funds requested.

Fringe Benefits

Provide the fringe benefit rates for each of the project's employees listed in the Personnel section. For each employee list:

- **Name/ Title:** Provide the name and title of each employee directly charging time to the grant.
- **Fringe Benefit Calculation:** Show how the funds requested are calculated.
- **Funds Requested:** Provide the amount of funds requested.

Travel

For each trip, describe the purpose of the trip and how it will achieve the objectives and outcomes of the project. Include the estimated date of the trip.

Applicants should include in their budget funds to travel to Helena once annually for a grantee meeting

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.

Contractual

Contractual/consultant costs are the expenses associated with purchasing goods and/or procuring services performed by an individual or organization other than the applicant in the form of a procurement relationship. *If a contact is necessary for goods or services, it should be listed here. If there is more than one contractor or consultant, each must be described separately, with funds requested.*

Other

Include any expenses not covered in any of the previous budget categories. Break down costs into cost/unit. Expenses in this section may include, but are not limited to, meetings and conferences, communications, rent expenses, advertisements, publication costs, and data collection. Provide a description, cost of each expense and how it is necessary for the completion of the project.

Indirect Costs

Indirect costs are not an allowable grant expense.

8. Financial Statements

- Complete the one-page financial spreadsheet in Webgrants and provide a copy of your organizations' Profit and Loss report for the last 24 months.

Evaluation of Applications

Screening

Submitted applications will be screened for compliance and responsiveness to this RFP. Proposals passing Screening will proceed to Evaluation. Proposals that do not pass screening will not receive further consideration for award.

The Department Grant Manager will notify all applicants of the results of the screening process within 30 days of the due date. Applicants may protest the screening decision of a rejected proposal as described in the Request for Reconsideration section of this Request for Proposal document.

Evaluation

Evaluation of proposals will be conducted by the Agriculture Development Council based on the Evaluation Criteria guidelines below.

Conflict of Interest

Members of the Ag Development Council are responsible for notifying MDA staff of any potential conflict of interest, real or apparent, with any applicant requesting funding. MDA Legal staff will review all disclosed conflicts of interest to determine whether a conflict of interest exists. If a conflict exists, the Council member will be recused from participating in the decision process on the conflicted application.

Evaluation Criteria

The Agricultural Development Council (ADC) will use the Evaluation Criteria below to score and rank eligible grant proposals:

Need for Services

Total Possible Score: 25

Does the applicant describe the needs faced by food and agriculture businesses in their area and the existing and anticipated challenges during the grant period, including:

- The number of counties served by the proposal, and number of clients in each county.
- The communities in that region and the demographic groups served.
- Data offered that clearly shows the food and ag industries in the proposed area covered.
- The barriers to entry for food and ag businesses in the proposed area covered.
- Local participation, commitment, and other forms of community buy-in.
- Emerging industries in the proposed region, the needs/challenges faced and potential for those industries.

Approach

Total Possible Score: 25

Based on the needs defined in the region, does the applicant describe the service(s) that will be provided in the following areas and how capacity will be added should funds be awarded:

- Innovative methodologies are highlighted; success is shown.
- Partnerships indicated with other stakeholders for a regional approach
- Business assistance

- Product development
- Marketing
- Nutritional analysis and labeling
- Education
- Assistance with regulatory compliance
- Training
- Identify growth opportunities
- Evaluation of existing technologies and developing technologies, and/or
- Other services that develop Montana’s capacity to produce food and value-added agricultural products.

***Please note that it is not expected that each applicant will provide services in all areas. ***

Outcomes / Measurement / Deliverables

Total Possible Score: 20

- Does the applicant describe objectives that include at least two measurable targets to be achieved during the grant period?
 - Will achieving the objectives impact the need(s) described in section 1?
- Do the outcomes logically follow the objectives? Can you reasonably expect that the outcomes will be reached if the objectives are completed?
 - Does the applicant explain how the objectives listed above will impact the need(s) described in section 1?
 - Do the proposed activities seem likely to improve conditions for food and agriculture businesses in the identified region?

Capacity and Expertise

Total Possible Score: 10

- Does the applicant describe capacity and expertise to successfully perform the work proposed and achieve the outcomes provided?
- Does the organization have the capacity to support businesses in achieving or maintaining compliance with laws and regulations?
- Do past clients and successful projects demonstrate the ability of the organization to support business development? Letters of support were not allowable, but quotes from business were encouraged.

Outreach

Total Possible Score: 10

- Does the applicant detail a reasonable plan for outreach to populations/businesses that need assistance?
- Is there any planned collaboration with other stakeholders or organizations in Montana to provide these services?

Budget

Total Possible Score: 10

- Elements included in the budget align with the proposed objectives of the project and include reasonable cost estimates.

- Grant costs are allowable under program guidelines.

Scoring Matrix

Members of the grant review workgroup will be given the table below as guidance for scoring applications.

Points Possible	Unacceptable	Acceptable	Good/Excellent
100	<70	70-85	86-100

Applications will be ranked based on the consensus (not average) scores of the Council.

Request for Reconsideration

Applicants who wish to have the results of Screening or Evaluation reconsidered may make such request based on substantive issues of fact concerning bias, discrimination, conflicts of interest and/or non-compliance with procedures described in this Request for Proposal.

The request for reconsideration must be submitted in writing to the Department of Agriculture Grants Manager within 7 days following notification of the Screening or Evaluation results.

Requests for reconsideration must describe the substantive fact(s) concerning bias, discrimination, conflict of interest, or noncompliance that affected the screening or evaluation of their proposal.

MDA Legal Counsel and/or their designee will review the request for reconsideration to determine whether the claims made are substantiated and likely to have resulted in an inaccurate, inconsistent, or unfair assessment of their proposal.

The applicant will be notified of the results of Legal Counsel's review within 7 days of the receipt of their request.

Should MDA Legal Counsel find that claims are substantiated, all application materials and the accompanying request for reconsideration will be provided to the Council Chair for review and decision.