

State of Nebraska

**Agricultural
Opportunities
And
Value-Added
Partnership
Act**

Application Guidelines

Deadline:

Noon (CDT) – October 3, 2008

**STATE OF NEBRASKA
AGRICULTURAL OPPORTUNITIES
AND
VALUE-ADDED AGRICULTURE PARTNERSHIP ACT

APPLICATION GUIDELINES
2008**

Introduction

This document provides for the implementation of the Agricultural Opportunities and Value-Added Agriculture Partnership Act pursuant to the Nebraska Revised Statute § 81-12, 125 et seq., as amended.

This publication consists of three parts which provide information concerning the submission of an application, project selection process, applicant eligibility, and granting procedure for the Agricultural Opportunities and Value-Added Agriculture Partnership Act (referred to herein as the Value-Added Ag program).

Contents

Part I. Overview and General Requirements. This section includes definitions, eligible applicants, eligible activities, match requirements, funding levels and application deadline.

Part II. Application and Instructions. This section includes instructions for completing an application and project review criteria.

Part III. Application Form. This section contains the application form and is the **only section that needs to be included in the application packets.**

For More Information

Please review the application materials carefully. For more information, contact

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Value-Added Ag Grant Application
October 3, 2008 Cycle

PART I. General Overview of Requirements

PURPOSE of the Agricultural Innovation and Value-Added Partnership Act (VAA)

This grant program supports the **collaborative** development of farming and ranching; the start-up and growth of value-added agricultural enterprises; and growth of rural communities and regions.

GRANT ADMINISTRATION

The Department of Economic Development (DED) with assistance provided by the Department of Agriculture (DOA) and the Rural Development Commission (RDC) has established and administers a grant process to provide grants to projects related to the purpose of the Value-Added Ag Program. Priority will be given to projects that make the greatest contribution to increasing the number and quality of self-employment opportunities for farming or ranching operations.

DEFINITIONS

FARMING OR RANCHING OPERATION

The active use, management, and operation of real and personal property for the production of crops or raising of livestock

IN-KIND MATCH

In-kind match is services or product donated as part of the project. Actual cost of products donated must be documented. Time donated will be allowed at \$25 per hour for professionals (doctors, lawyers, accountants, consultants, etc.). All other time will be allowed at \$10 per hour.

SPECIALTY CROP

Fruits, vegetables, tree nuts, dried fruits, and nursery crops, including floriculture. (These are examples – other crops may be considered.)

VALUE-ADDED

Value-added means increasing the net worth of food or nonfood agricultural products by processing, alternative production and handling.

GRANT HIGHLIGHTS

- ◆ Project must result in benefit to more than a single enterprise, person or entity.
- ◆ Maximum grant is \$75,000.
- ◆ Grants will be for one year from date of announcement.
- ◆ Grants requesting additional funding must compete with other grant applications.
- ◆ Match may not come from other state or federal funds.
- ◆ Collaborating entities must share equally in the value of the match contribution.
- ◆ Only one grant per project in any one fiscal year.
- ◆ Administrative costs are not eligible for grant support or as match.
- ◆ Identification of measurable goals and expected outcomes is required in the grant application.
- ◆ Identification of how the project will be evaluated is required in the grant application.
- ◆ Value must be added to Nebraska farm and/or ranch production.

Note this new restriction: Whenever grant funds are used to acquire or lease a building or equipment to be used in a farming or ranching operation or in a private enterprise, any removal from the state or resale of the building or equipment within three years after the date of award of the grant funds without the prior approval of the Department of Economic Development shall be deemed a utilization or diversion of grant funds to a purpose or expenditure not specified or contemplated in the application or terms of the award of the grant.

ELIGIBLE APPLICANTS

Eligible applicants for grants under the Value-Added Program include:

- ◆ Communities
- ◆ Counties
- ◆ Agencies
- ◆ Educational institutions
- ◆ Economic development providers
- ◆ Nonprofit organizations
- ◆ Agricultural cooperatives
- ◆ Agricultural associations
- ◆ Agricultural marketing associations or entities
- ◆ Resource conservation organizations
- ◆ Development districts
- ◆ Farming or ranching operations that meet the purposes of this act

ELIGIBLE ACTIVITIES:

Grants under the Agricultural Opportunities and Value-Added Partnership Act shall be used to support projects in the following areas:

- ◆ Community and multi-community initiatives;
- ◆ Creation, retention, and transfer of value-added agricultural business initiatives in rural communities;
- ◆ Efforts to obtain start-up or working capital or other capital expenditures necessary for the development of the project;
- ◆ Community-based, farmer-owned, or rancher-owned value-added initiatives;
- ◆ Market development;
- ◆ Development of cooperatives;
- ◆ Education and training;
- ◆ Research;
- ◆ Non-administrative business planning assistance, feasibility and market studies, capitalization plans, and technical assistance; and
- ◆ Other activities deemed necessary to fulfill the purposes of this act

Projects shall demonstrate the ability to provide private new enterprise formation or expanded incomes and economic opportunities for existing enterprises.

MATCH REQUIREMENTS: (Note new requirements)

To be eligible for a grant, an applicant shall document a matching amount of money or in-kind contributions or a combination of both equal to 25 percent of the grant funds requested, except that if the grant funds will **be used to acquire or lease a building or equipment** to be used in a farming or ranching operation or in a private enterprise, an application shall provide a matching amount in money and in-kind contribution of no less than 50 percent of the grant funds requested of which the matching amount in money shall be no less than 25 percent of the grant funds requested.

Priority for the awarding of grants may be given to applicants that provide a matching amount in money.

Matching funds may not be from other state or federal funds.

FUNDING LEVELS:

The maximum amount for an award per project is \$75,000. A total of \$850,000 has been allocated for this program cycle. Grant recipients will have one year from the date of the announcement to expend the grant funds.

APPLICATION DEADLINE:

All applications must be ***received*** at either the Nebraska Rural Development Commission's North Platte office ***OR*** the Nebraska Department of Economic Development's Lincoln office by noon, Friday, October 3, 2008. One (1) original application and six (6) complete copies must be submitted. Also include a CD containing the completed application. Signatures are not required on the CD copy and you do not need to include supporting documentation. Staple sets in upper left corner; do not bind. You do not need to include pages a-j (application guidelines and instructions) in your applications.

No fax copies or emailed copies will be accepted. **NO EXCEPTIONS.**

All **courier-delivered** or **mailed** applications should be directed only to:

Nebraska Rural Development Commission
Administration Annex
1101 Halligan Drive
North Platte, NE 69103

Applications may be **hand-delivered** by the applicant to the Commission's
North Platte address above

OR to:

VAA Applications
Nebraska Department of Economic Development
Fourth Floor, State Office Building
Lincoln, NE

Do **NOT** mail or courier-deliver applications to the Lincoln office.

**Part II: Agricultural Innovation and Value-Added Agriculture
Partnership Act
Application Process**

The following grant application process will be followed:

Step 1. Complete attached Application Form.

- The form is a WORD document that can be downloaded and filled in.
- Substitute forms are not acceptable and will not be considered for funding.
- Application must be typed – preferably in Arial and 10 to 12 pitch font.
- Additional pages may be added to the application. Please limit total application to no more than 20 pages including letters of match commitment.
- Do not include general letters of project support.
- Letters of match pledge must state the dollar amount of the cash and/or in-kind pledge, not just general support of the project.
- Letters of match support must be received as part of application packet. Letters sent to DED or the Commission independent of the application will not be considered.
- Be sure your application is signed and dated by all applicant partners.

Step 2. Applications will be reviewed for completeness and eligibility. Incomplete and/or ineligible applications will not be considered for funding.

Step 3.

- All applications must be received at either the Nebraska Department of Economic Development's Lincoln office **OR** the Nebraska Rural Development Commission's North Platte office by noon, Friday, October 3, 2008.
- One (1) original application and six (6) complete copies must be submitted. Also include a CD copy of the application. The CD copy does not require signatures or supporting documentation.
- Staple sets in upper left corner; do not bind. You do not need to include pages a-h (application guidelines) in your applications.
- No faxed or emailed copies will be accepted. NO EXCEPTIONS.

Step 4. An evaluation panel will review the application and make funding recommendations to the Nebraska Department of Economic Development.

Step 5. The Department of Economic Development director will make final funding recommendations to the Governor.

Step 6. A public announcement of funding decisions will be made.

Step 7. Successful applicants will be notified by phone and e-mail.

Project Review Criteria

Eligible applications will be evaluated using the following criteria:

Highest priority will be given to projects deemed to contribute most to increasing the number and quality of self-employment opportunities for farming and ranching operations. Priority for the awarding of grants may be given to applicants that provide a matching amount in money.

Other criteria includes:

- ◆ Proposal demonstrates a high probability of resulting in actions that will influence farms and ranches
- ◆ Impact on small and self-employment farms, ranches, and value-added enterprises
- ◆ Evidence of follow-up activity and sustainability
- ◆ Match commitment from farms/ranches who will benefit from the project
- ◆ New activity rather than continuation of existing activity
- ◆ Demonstration of capability to effectively complete the project within the budget and time available
- ◆ Connection between the project and farms/ranches
- ◆ Ability of the project to be replicated
- ◆ Match amount and commitment of match
- ◆ Specification of measurable goals and expected outcomes
- ◆ Specification of evaluation and impact assessment process
- ◆ Extent to which the project responds to the purpose of the Act
- ◆ Ability of the project to be completed in a one year period

Application Instructions

Applications must be kept to 20 or fewer typed pages including attachments. Do not include general letters of support – only those letters detailing the cash or in-kind support for your project should be included with application. Attachments for budget estimates do not count in the 20 pages.

- 1. Project Name:** The working name for your project. Limit the name to four or five words.
- 2. Grant Amount Requested:** Fill in the total GRANT amount requested – not your total project amount.
- 3. Applicant Names:** Use this space to identify the project partners. Do not list all participants (such as speakers) just list the project partners. Project partners are responsible for sharing in the match requirement.
- 4. Administering Agency/Entity:** Identify the entity who will receive the funds and be responsible for the monitoring, reporting, and preparation of reimbursement requests for this project.
- 5. Contact Information:** The Rural Development Commission will only send communications, including notification of grant award, to the contact person listed in THIS section.
- 6. Project Summary:** A summary (25 words or less) of your project suitable for inclusion in a news release.
- 7. Project Description:** Answer all questions as fully as the page restriction will allow.
- 8. Timeline:** Proposed timelines should be broken down into quarterly segments. We recognize the timelines may need adjusting after the awards.
- 9. Other grant funds:** List here any other grant funds received for this project, regardless of source.
- 10. Existing project:** This grant cannot be used for replacement funding (including previous grant funds from any source that are expiring). Explain how this grant funding will be used and how the project will be expanded.

11. Identify legislative districts and senators: Identify the appropriate information for each applicant partner.

12. Signatures: ALL Applicant Partners listed in Question 3 must sign the grant application. Original signatures are required on one copy submitted with the application. You may photocopy the signatures on the other six sets. No signatures or attachments are required on the CD copy of the application.

BUDGET PAGE: Remember this is a REIMBURSEMENT grant. No expenses incurred prior to the date of grant approval will be considered for reimbursement. All expenses must be paid and the appropriate documentation presented prior to reimbursement requests being processed.

- Prepare a line item budget with appropriate estimated financial detail (see example on budget form)
- Include estimates for all expenses exceeding \$1,000
- CASH match column is for cash items only. This is new money and does not include any existing salaries, use of equipment, meeting rooms, etc. Any project assistance that is not actual CASH should be reported in the "In-Kind" column. Amounts reported in the "Cash Match" and "In-Kind Match" columns should be supported by signed pledge letters from the match source. These letters should be attached to the application. Letters not received with the application will not be considered.
- Estimated revenues such as possible registration fees for project workshops may be counted as CASH match for the application purposes. (Note: if the estimated revenues are not received, the applicants will not be reimbursed for the full amount unless they raise some other CASH match)
- Be sure to describe and list the source of any Other Funds (any funds other than the Grant Amount requested and the grant match funds). This may include other state and federal funds that contribute to your final project. It is important that you designate the source of these project contributions.

- Grant funds requested + Cash match + In-kind match + Other funds = Total Project
- Be sure and double check your math

Examples of expenses not eligible for reimbursement (list is not all inclusive):

- Food, beverages, or food service supplies (cups, plates, napkins, etc.) Match funds may be used for these purposes.
- “Wearable advertising” (includes items such as t-shirts and caps). Match funds may be used for these purposes.
- Promotional advertising items such as pens, pencils, etc. Match funds may be used for these purposes.
- Billboard advertisements. Match funds may be used for these purposes.

Project Name: _____

Part III. Application Form

Agricultural Innovation and Value-Added Agriculture Partnership Act Application Form

*Applications must be kept to **20 or fewer typed pages** including attachments, addenda, and letters of match commitment.*

1. Project Name: *(limit project name to four or five words)*

2. Grant Amount Requested: \$

3. Applicant Name(s)/Organization(s): *Describe the partnership that will participate in and **provide match** support for this project: names of organizations, entities, agencies (public and private), for profit businesses, not for profit businesses, etc. A signed letter of commitment from each of the partners **detailing their match support** is required with the application.*

Applicant A:

Applicant B:

(Add additional lines as needed for applicant partners)

4. Administering Agency/Entity: *(This will be the entity receiving the funds and responsible for the monitoring, reporting, and preparation of reimbursement requests.)*

5. Contact Information from Adminstrating Agency/Entity: *The Rural Development Commission will only send communications, including notification of grant award, to the contact person listed in THIS section.*

Contact Person:

Mailing Address:

Phone:

Fax:

Email: *(contact person must supply an email address)*

Project Name: _____

6. Project Summary: *(Please provide a concise summary -approximately 25 words or less - of your project suitable for use in news releases.)*

7. Project Description:

- List measurable project goals. Describe how they will be documented and measured. (Use precise measurements, not general terms.)
- How will the project address program purposes?
- How will the project demonstrate sustainability, or how will the project build economic development capacity?
- How will this project be sustainable?
- Describe the evaluation and impact assessment process and procedures for the project . (Use precise measurements, not general terms).
- How will the project realize benefit and/or build economic capacity for Nebraska farms and/or ranches. (Use specific examples, not generic terms.)

8. Provide a timeline for the project *using quarterly segments ending March 30; June 30; September 30; and December 31. We recognize the timelines may need adjusting after the awards.*

9. Has any portion of this project ever received a grant from any source? *If yes, state grant amount, purpose and source:*

10. Does this request provide funding for an existing project? *If so, discuss how the grant will expand the project and not be used for replacement funding.*

Project Name: _____

BUDGET WORKSHEET - Prepare line item budget for all funds requested. Include copies of cost estimates for expenses exceeding \$1,000 and signed letters of commitment for cash match and in-kind match.

Activity	Grant Amount Requested	Cash Match (Amt & Source)	In-Kind Match (Amt & Source)	Source & Description of <u>Other</u> Activity Funds	Total Project Funds
<i>Example: Marketing new product</i>	<i>\$75,000</i>	<i>\$5,000 Partner A \$5,000 Partner B</i>	<i>\$4,375 Partner A \$4,375 Partner B</i>	<i>\$20,000 Grant from Market My Product (fictitious)</i>	<i>\$113,750</i>
TOTALS					