

NOTICE

DEPARTMENT OF AGRICULTURE

PA Agriculture Innovation Grant Program

2024-2025 Program Guidelines

The Department of Agriculture (Department) hereby provides notice of the standards and requirements for the Pennsylvania Agriculture Innovation Grant Program. This notice establishes the procedures by which grant applications will be solicited, reviewed and by which grants will be awarded, drawing on funding available in Fiscal Year (FY) 2024-2025.

As one of Pennsylvania's legacy industries, this funding aims to ensure there are opportunities for all its farms, businesses, and residents in the agriculture sector to thrive. Pennsylvania's endorsement of agriculture innovation helps ensure food security and economic stability while also signifying a commitment to sustainability, offering a path to a more resilient and efficient agricultural future.

1. Program Objective.

It is the intent of the General Assembly to offer reimbursement grants to promote and support agricultural innovation to ensure the competitiveness, resiliency, environmental stewardship, and vitality of farms, agribusinesses and agricultural support services in this Commonwealth.

2. Definitions.

"Agricultural commodity." As defined in the act of June 10, 1982 (P.L. 454, No. 133), referred to as the Right-to-Farm Law.

"Conservation district." As defined in 3 Pa. C.S. § 503 (relating to definitions).

"Cooperative association." As defined in 3 Pa. C.S. § 4502 (relating to definitions).

"Department." The Department of Agriculture of the Commonwealth.

"Licensed doctor of veterinary medicine." A person who is currently licensed under the act of December 27, 1974 (P.L. 995, No. 326), known as the Veterinary Medicine Practice Act.

"Innovation." The practical implementation of ideas that results in new products, processes or services.

"Person." An individual, partnership, association, firm, corporation or any other legal entity.

"Program." The Agriculture Innovation Grant Program established under Article XVI-Z of the Act of April 9, 1929 (P.L. 343, No. 175), referred to as the Fiscal Code.

3. Eligible Applicant. An applicant that meets one of the following criteria:

- a. A person who grows an agricultural commodity and who has anticipated sales greater than \$2,000 per year.
- b. A person who processes an agricultural commodity and has anticipated sales greater than \$10,000 per year.
- c. A person who provides technical assistance or services to farmers for conservation, engineering, veterinary care, animal disease management, farm management, agricultural commodity production, nutrient management or similar services.
- d. A person or cooperative association that utilizes agricultural commodities to create products or energy.

4. Eligible Projects. A project that the Department determines does one or more of the following:

- a. Utilization of innovation to improve energy efficiency, improve water quality, reduce water consumption, reduce odors or address solid waste concerns.
- b. Utilization of innovation to improve production, processing, commercialization or utilization of agricultural commodities.
- c. Innovation that produces energy from agricultural sources, including manure, food waste or biomass.
- d. Innovation equipment that provides low-carbon or no-carbon energy sources from agricultural commodities.
- e. Innovation technology that assists eligible applicants with the management of their farms, including diagnostic tools and services.
- f. Innovation technology that assists a packer, processor or cooperative in more efficient sorting, grading or processing of agricultural commodities.
- g. Innovation that improves biosecurity or health of plants or animals.
- h. Innovation that supports cybersecurity or data analytics.

5. Reimbursement Grant Program. Program grants shall be reimbursement grants. The following shall apply:

a. *Innovation planning project grant.*--An eligible applicant may apply for a grant to develop a strategic plan to utilize innovation to improve agricultural practices, technologies, operations or approaches within a specific business, geographic area or network. The following shall apply to a grant under this subsection:

- i. The amount of a grant shall be no less than \$7,500 and no more than \$50,000.
- ii. A grantee must use non-State sourced matching funds equal to at least 30% of the grant amount for the project.

b. *On-site project grant.*--An eligible applicant may apply for a grant for a project that focuses on implementing innovation practices, technologies or approaches on an individual farm or property producing or processing an agricultural commodity. The following shall apply to a grant under this subsection:

- i. The amount of the grant shall be no less than \$5,000 and no more than \$200,000.
- ii. A grantee must use non-State sourced matching funds equal to at least 50% of the grant amount for the project.

c. *Regional impact project grant.*--An eligible applicant may apply for a grant for a project designed to address challenges, promote efficiencies or achieve specific goals for multiple eligible applicants. The following shall apply to a grant under this subsection:

- i. The amount of the grant shall be no less than \$100,000 and no more than \$2,000,000.
- ii. The grantee must use non-State sourced matching funds equal to at least 50% of the grant amount for the project.
- iii. The project must impact two or more persons or businesses or be a cooperative association that grows, harvests, processes, packs or manages an agricultural commodity.

6. Application Procedure.

a. *Online Applications Only.* An application for a grant under the Program shall be submitted through the Commonwealth's Single Application for Assistance online application system at www.esa.dced.state.pa.us.

b. *Application Window.* Applications must be submitted through the Single Application for Assistance online application system between 8:00 am EST on September 28, 2024, and 11:59 pm EST on November 15, 2024. Applications received outside of that application window will not be considered or reviewed.

c. *Application Requirements.* An application for a grant under the Program shall contain the following information:

- i. The applicant's name, business address, and contact information.
- ii. A statement as to whether the applicant seeks an innovation planning project grant, on-site project grant, or regional impact project grant.
- iii. The details of the project for which reimbursement grant money is sought, including the following:
 - A. A project narrative, including a statement of the maximum amount of grant money sought for the project.
 - B. A project budget.
 - C. An addendum that will cover:
 - (1). Alignment with the intent of the program
 - (2). Metrics for tracking success
 - (3). An itemized budget
 - (4). Letters of support
 - (5). Additional project details

7. Pennsylvania Department of Agriculture Innovation Principles. The Department will evaluate an application based upon the degree to which the project is:

- a. Relevant: The innovation addresses an agricultural challenge or helps the agriculture sector deal with significant issues.
- b. Practical: The innovation's deployment should not burden users or add more complications than business as usual.

c. **Accessible:** The innovation can be directly used by farmers, or a service can be rendered at the farm level. Innovation at the processing level should enable further utilization of agricultural products to make them more readily available.

d. **Scalable:** The innovation must have applicability to small and medium-sized farms in Pennsylvania. Processors should be able to expand or replicate the innovation and or increase access for small and medium-sized farms.

e. **An improvement to the Triple Bottom Line:** The innovation should be rooted in the principle of the triple bottom line (people, planet, profit). The innovation should improve society, the environment, and the economy.

8. Disposition and Review of Grant Applications. The Department will review each application, and supporting documentation submitted therewith, for completeness and accuracy. If an application is found to be incomplete or inaccurate, the Department may request additional documentation and may discontinue further processing of the application until the requested information is received.

9. Grant Agreement. After the Secretary approves a grant application, and as a precondition to the Department's release of grant moneys to a successful applicant, the Department and the applicant will execute a written or electronic grant agreement which describes the terms and conditions subject to which the grant is made. The grant agreement will contain and conform to the requirements of this notice and will also contain any special terms and conditions as required by the Secretary. Among the terms of the grant agreement will be a requirement that the grant recipient provide the Department full and complete access to the records relating to the performance of the project and submit the information as the Department may require. Applicants who wish to view the full terms and conditions of the grant agreement in advance of submitting an application may contact the Department at the address set forth in section 11. Applicants who are unable to agree to the terms and conditions should not apply.

10. Distribution of Grant Money. As Program grants are reimbursement grants, the Department will not issue grant money until the successful applicant submits all of the following to the Department:

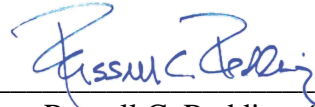
a. A verified statement that the eligible project has been completed or implemented including date of completion.

b. Bills and invoices demonstrating that expenses were incurred for which reimbursement grant funds are sought.

Documents submitted to the Department under this paragraph shall be directed to the Department of Agriculture, Attn: Michael Roth, 2301 North Cameron Street, Harrisburg, PA 17110-9408, (717) 210-1217, michroth@pa.gov.

11. Additional Information. Additional information may be obtained from the Department by contacting Michael Roth, (717) 210-1217, michroth@pa.gov. A webinar and additional reference materials will be made available shortly after the opening of the grant on 09/28/2024.

DEPARTMENT OF AGRICULTURE



Russell C. Redding, Secretary