



RHODE ISLAND LOCAL AGRICULTURE AND SEAFOOD ACT (LASA) GRANTS

FISCAL YEAR 2024 REQUEST FOR APPLICATIONS

The Rhode Island Department of Environmental Management, Division of Agriculture is accepting grant applications for the Local Agriculture and Seafood Act Grant Program. This grant round the Department will administer approximately \$650,000 in grants. The goal of the program, which was established by the Local Agriculture and Seafood Act (LASA) of 2012, is to support the growth, development, and marketing of local food and seafood in Rhode Island. It is made possible by funding from the State of Rhode Island.

KEY DATES

Release Date: October 1, 2023

Application Deadline: November 30, 2023, at 11:59 PM

CONTENTS

I. PROGRAM OVERVIEW	3
II. APPLICATION	8
III. EVALUATION CRITERIA	12
IV. GRANT MANAGEMENT & REPORTING	13
APPENDIX: DEFINITIONS	16

CONTACT

PROGRAMMATIC QUESTIONS

Division of Agriculture

DEM.LASA@dem.ri.gov

(401) 222-2781

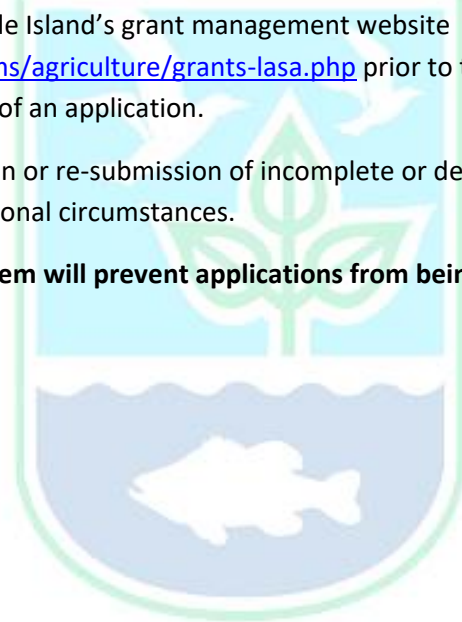
Division of Agriculture staff are available to assist you during State of Rhode Island business hours, Monday– Friday, 8:30 AM to 4:00 PM. Assistance may not be available shortly before deadlines.

SUBMISSION POLICY

It is the applicant's responsibility to adhere to all application instructions including all deadlines included in this request for applications (RFA). The RIDEM Division of Agriculture will accept electronic submission via the State of Rhode Island's grant management website <http://www.dem.ri.gov/programs/agriculture/grants-lasa.php> prior to the posted deadline as the final and sole acceptable submission of an application.

RIDEM will not accept submission or re-submission of incomplete or delayed applications after the posted deadline, barring exceptional circumstances.

RIDEM's online submission system will prevent applications from being submitted after the cut-off time.



I. PROGRAM OVERVIEW

QUICK FACTS

PROGRAM PURPOSE

The LASA Grant Program provides grants that directly benefit and strengthen the local food system in Rhode Island. The program was established by the Local Agriculture and Seafood Act (LASA) of 2012 via an innovative public-private partnership between the state and three private foundations — the van Beuren Charitable Foundation, the Henry P. Kendall Foundation, and the Rhode Island Foundation. Currently, the program is made possible by funding from the State of Rhode Island. The goal of the LASA grant program is to support the growth, development, and marketing of local food and seafood in Rhode Island.

2024 FUNDING PRIORITIES

The LASA Advisory Committee sets priorities each grant year and makes recommendations to the Director of the RIDEM. Applicants are required to fulfil **at least one** (not all) of the funding priorities listed below.

- Support the entry, growth, and/or sustainability of [Socially Disadvantaged, Beginning, Small, Women, and veteran agriculture and aquaculture producers and fishers](#)
- Support [climate-smart agriculture mitigation activities](#) and Climate Change related adaptations throughout the local Food System.
- Support the development of new marketing, promotion, sales, and/or distribution channels, including connecting local farms and fishers with Rhode Island’s food insecure communities.
- Support the development of new products, including value added processing capacity.
- Foster new cooperatives, partnerships, and/or collaborations among Rhode Island agriculture and aquaculture producers, and fishers and supporting organizations.
- Protect the future availability of agricultural land for producers, including farm transition planning and implementation.
- Assist with on farm Food Safety improvements including FSMA and HACCP Compliance.

ELIGIBILITY

For-profit [farmers](#), fishermen/women, and producer groups are eligible to apply as are non-profit organizations. Applicants must be based in the State of Rhode Island. The Advisory Committee will value geographic diversity in the applicant pool when making award determinations. Only [Small](#) and/or [Beginning](#) farmers, or producer groups of small or beginning farmers, are eligible to apply for capital grants. (Aquaculture operators are considered farmers in this regard).

Ineligible activities include non-project related travel, scholarships, general operating funds, on-going capital campaigns, political or policy advocacy campaigns, conference/workshop attendance fees, etc.

SECTION I: PROGRAM OVERVIEW

All costs associated with developing or submitting a proposal in response to this request, or with providing oral or written clarification of proposal content, are ineligible expenses and shall be the sole responsibility of the applicant. The State assumes no responsibility for these costs.

AVAILABLE FUNDS

The RIDEM Division of Agriculture will award between \$650,000 and \$700,000 in this grant round.

MINIMUM & MAXIMUM AWARD

The maximum grant award available to a farmer, individual, business (e.g., LLC) or non-profit organization is \$20,000.

Overhead and/or administrative costs are limited to 10% of total budget proposal.

PROJECT LENGTH

Projects may be up to 24 months in duration. Grantees are responsible for interim and final reports. Interim reports are due on June 30, 2025, and final reports are due on June 30, 2026. Any grantees who do not provide timely interim and final grant reports will be ineligible for future LASA Grant Program funding.

FUNDING SOURCE

The round of the LASA Act is funded by the State of Rhode Island.



FUNDING OPPORTUNITY DESCRIPTION

PROGRAM PURPOSE

The goal of the program, which was established by the Local Agriculture and Seafood Act (LASA) of 2012, is to support the growth, development, and marketing of local food and seafood in Rhode Island.

HOW TO APPLY

All applications must be submitted via the State of Rhode Island Grant Management System (eCivis). Grant details and the link to the application can be found at

<http://www.dem.ri.gov/programs/agriculture/grants-lasa.php> Applications will be accepted from **October 1, 2023 – November 30, 2023 at 11:59 PM.**

For eCivis User support please see the [Grant Application User Guide](#)

TECHNICAL ASSISTANCE

Technical Assistance will be offered via a webinar hosted by the Rhode Island Food Policy Council (RIFPC). You can [register here \[us02web.zoom.us\]](https://us02web.zoom.us). The webinar will take place on Monday, October 23rd from 3:30-5pm via Zoom and made available on both the RI DEM and RIFPC websites.

SECTION I: PROGRAM OVERVIEW

Additional one-on-one technical assistance will be provided by RIFPC. To request assistance, you can [fill out this form](#). You may also contact Maggie Longo at lasahelp@rifoodcouncil.org or 401-490-5687

For additional resources, visit the RIDEM Division of Agriculture's LASA Grants Application webpage at <https://dem.ri.gov/programs/agriculture/grants-lasa.php>

ELIGIBILITY

ELIGIBLE APPLICANTS

For-profit [farmers](#), fishermen/women, and producer groups are eligible to apply as are non-profit organizations. Applicants must be based in the State of Rhode Island. The Advisory Committee will value geographic diversity in the applicant pool when making award determinations. Only small and/or beginning farmers, or producer groups of small or beginning farmers, are eligible to apply for capital grants. (Aquaculture operators are considered farmers in this regard).

All costs associated with developing or submitting a proposal in response to this request, or with providing oral or written clarification of proposal content, are ineligible expenses and shall be the sole responsibility of the applicant. The State assumes no responsibility for these costs.

ELIGIBLE PROJECTS

Projects/programs must serve **at least one** of the following purposes in order to be eligible for funding through the LASA Grants Program:

1. Assist in the marketing of Rhode Island grown agricultural products and local seafood¹ for the purpose of sale and promotion.
2. Enhance the economic competitiveness of Rhode Island grown agricultural products and local seafood.
3. Provide financial and technical assistance support to organizations and producers for activities and programs which enhance the economic viability of local agriculture, and support the development of a locally based, safe and sustainable food system.
4. Perform other activities necessary to facilitate the success and viability of the state's agricultural and seafood sectors.

In addition to providing grants for projects or programs, the LASA Grant Program may also provide capital grants to small or beginning Rhode Island farmers and aquaculture producers to support the growth and sustainability of Rhode Island's farming and aquaculture industries.

INELIGIBLE PROJECTS

- Applications that fail to demonstrate at least one of the program purposes
- Applications for completed projects for which the applicant seeks reimbursement
- Applicants out of compliance with any federal, state, or local laws or regulations
- Applicants who have previously received LASA Grants and failed to meet reporting obligations
- Applicants not engaged in local agriculture, aquaculture, or local seafood
- Applicants who failed to meet requirements for previous Department grants and/or assistance programs, or from individuals or groups unable to perform or currently experiencing performance issues with previous Department grant obligations
- Ineligible Project activities include non-project related travel, scholarships, general operating funds, on-going capital campaigns, political or policy advocacy campaigns, conference/workshop

¹ For the purposes of the LASA Grant, local seafood will be defined as product landed in Rhode Island.

SECTION I: PROGRAM OVERVIEW

- attendance fees, etc.
- Capital grants from fishermen/women are not eligible for LASA funding due to the originating legislation.

MATCHING FUNDS

Matching funds are not required for this grant program.

APPLICATION REVIEW

Program funds are to be administered by the RI Department of Environmental Management and evaluated by the LASA Grants Program Advisory Committee. This committee is chaired by the Chief of the Division of Agriculture, the LASA Grants Program Advisory Committee is appointed by the Director of RI DEM and represents agencies, organizations, and individuals that have a role or interest in the planning, development, and support of viable agriculture and seafood sectors and a locally-based sustainable food system. See **Section III: Evaluation Criteria** for more information.

DEADLINES

All applications must be submitted by **November 30, 2023 at 11:59 PM**. RIDEM will not accept applications submitted after this time.

Applicants can expect to hear back regarding award decisions in March 2024.

KEY DATES

DATES MAY BE SUBJECT TO CHANGE

OCTOBER 1, 2023	Request for Applications (RFA) released
NOVEMBER 30, 2023, at 11:59 PM	Application Deadline
MARCH 2024	Award Decisions Announced
APRIL 2024	Grant Agreement Execution
JUNE 30, 2024	All Grant Funds Obligated
AUGUST 31, 2026	Final Report Due

RELATED FUNDED OPPORTUNITIES

FARM SERVICE AGENCY FOOD STORAGE FACILITY LOAN PROGRAM

The Farm Service Agency Food Storage Facility Loan Program provides low-interest financing, so producers can build or upgrade facilities to store eligible commodities, including fruits and vegetables. Eligible facility types include facilities for cold storage. Drying and handling and storage equipment is also eligible, including storage and handling trucks.

www.fsa.usda.gov/programs-and-services/price-support/facility-loans/farm-storage

NATURAL RESOURCES CONSERVATION SERVICE

Natural Resources Conservation Service (NRCS) financial assistance programs (EQIP, CSP, and AMA) offer financial and technical assistance to help agricultural producers make and maintain conservation improvements on their land.

www.nrcs.usda.gov/wps/portal/nrcs/main/vt/programs/financial

ADDITIONAL FUNDING OPPORTUNITIES & RESOURCES FOR BUSINESSES

RIDEM offers a menu of [funding opportunities](#) and resources available to the Rhode Island agricultural community:

- Funding Opportunities: <http://www.dem.ri.gov/programs/agriculture/grants.php>



II. EVALUATION CRITERIA

Applications will be screened for eligibility and scored based on the 2021 Scoring Rubric (see below) and recommended to the Director of RIDEM for award. The LASA Grant Program Advisory Committee may recommend an award amount different from the amount requested.

SCREENING CRITERIA

Applications will be screened based upon the following criteria:

- The application meets all eligibility and submission requirements.
- The application adequately identifies all contingencies or permits that may be required.
- The applicant's information complete
- The applicant has registered as a vendor with the [Ocean State Procurement Portal](#)
- Applications without budgets will not be accepted.

SCORING CRITERIA

Eligible applications will be scored according to the following criteria:

NATURE OF APPLICATION

Does the project:

- Support the entry, growth, and/or sustainability of [Socially Disadvantaged, Beginning, Small](#), Women, and veteran agriculture and aquaculture producers and fishers
- Support [climate-smart agriculture mitigation activities](#) and Climate Change related agricultural adaptations
- Support the development of new marketing, promotion, sales, and/or distribution channels, including connecting local farms and fishers with Rhode Island's food insecure communities.
- Support the development of new products, including value added processing capacity.
- Foster new cooperatives, partnerships, and/or collaborations among Rhode Island agriculture and aquaculture producers, and fishers and supporting organizations.
- Protect the future availability of agricultural land for producers, including farm transition planning and implementation.
- Assist with on farm Food Safety improvements including FSMA and HACCP Compliance.

Does the proposal seem technically feasible based on applicant's background experience and expertise?

Is the applicant a for-profit farm, fishery, or other food business?

Up to 20 points

OUTCOMES

- Is there a strong outcomes-based case described for the project?

SECTION II: EVALUATION CRITERIA

- Is there a clear description of what success looks like for this project?
- Is there a clear description of how the applicant will evaluate success of the project once it is completed?
- Is there a clear plan for the project to become self-sustaining?

Up to 10 points

REGULATORY/ ZONING/ LEGAL INFORMATION

Is the provided information about regulatory or zoning requirements for the project relevant and complete? Has the applicant described and/or uploaded permits or approvals needed to ensure the project will move forward? If working with leased property, have lease terms and timeline been clarified and factored into the proposal and lease uploaded?

Up to 5 points

REALISTIC BUDGET

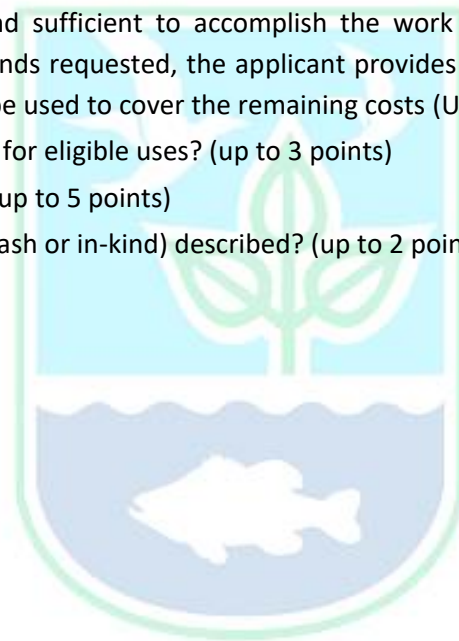
Budget summary is realistic and sufficient to accomplish the work proposed. If the total costs are significantly greater than the funds requested, the applicant provides a clear and sound explanation of other funding sources that will be used to cover the remaining costs (Up to 5 points).

Is the budget reasonable and all for eligible uses? (up to 3 points)

All budget items well justified? (up to 5 points)

Are there any matching funds (cash or in-kind) described? (up to 2 points)

Up to 15 points



III. GRANT MANAGEMENT & REPORTING

GRANT AGREEMENT & PAYMENT

Prior to receiving funding, successful applicants must sign a grant agreement with the Rhode Island Department of Environmental Management – Division of Agriculture (RIDEM) indicating their intent to complete the proposed project and authorizing RIDEM to monitor the project’s progress. The grant agreement will include provisions (terms and conditions) set by the State of Rhode Island as well as any program-specific requirements.

Prior to commencement of work and release of any payments, grantee must submit:

- A. Register as a vendor with the state of Rhode Island Procurement portal - <https://ridop.ri.gov/ocean-state-procures-osp>

GRANTEE PAYMENT SCHEDULE

The Department will provide 100% of funds upon the receipt of 1) a signed grant agreement and related documents; 2) the submission and approval of a claim with associated invoice submitted to the Division of Agriculture – DEM.LASA@dem.ri.gov ; and 3) proof that the applicant has obtained any permits that may be required for their project, if applicable.

Permits that are necessary for the successful completion of your project, such as a building permit, wastewater permit, etc. must be obtained prior to submitting your application. The Department reserves the right to deny your application if you fail to obtain the necessary permits.

Only expenses incurred during the grant period are eligible for reimbursement. Project costs occurring prior to or after the end date of an executed grant are not eligible for reimbursement.

PERMITS

Applicants who are awarded a grant must apply for and receive all required permits, licenses, and any other federal, state, or local approvals necessary for the project prior to any reimbursement from the Department.

SITE VISITS

RIDEM staff may contact successful applicants to arrange a site visit for their project during or proceeding the grant agreement period.

PUBLIC INFORMATION

Applicants are advised that all materials submitted to the State of Rhode Island for consideration in response to this Request for Grant Proposals will be public record, as defined in Title 38 Chapter 2 of the Rhode Island General Laws, without exception, and will be released for inspection immediately upon request, once awards have been made. **However, any identifying information and any financial information will be redacted, thus applicants’ personal and financial information will not be made public.** Applicants will be notified of award decisions by March 2024.

DURATION

All projects funded in this round must be completed no later than **June 30, 2026**. Final reports must be

submitted no later than **August 31, 2026**.

REPORTING

Grantees should submit a final report as soon as their project is complete but no later than **August 31, 2026**. Final reports should be submitted via email to DEM.LASA@dem.ri.gov and must include verification that the project has been completed, photo and/or video documentation of the completed project, and a description of how the grant has improved produce safety on the farm. The RIDEM Division of Agriculture may request receipts, proof of purchases, or other documents showing that grant funds have been used to complete the project.

Information submitted in any report to the Division will be a public record.

