



RI Department of Environmental Management Local Agriculture and Seafood Act Grants Program 2016 GUIDELINES & INSTRUCTIONS

The Rhode Island Department of Environmental Management, Division of Agriculture is accepting grant applications for the Local Agriculture and Seafood Act Grants Program. 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 \$100,000 in funding from the State of Rhode Island, and an additional \$130,000 in matching funds from the Henry P. Kendall Foundation, the van Beuren Charitable Foundation, and the Rhode Island Foundation. This unique and unprecedented public-private partnership will provide grants intended to directly benefit and strengthen the local food system in Rhode Island.

Priorities

The RIDEM Division of Agriculture, in concert with the LASA Grants Program Advisory Committee, administers the LASA Grants Program. The LASA Advisory Committee sets priorities each grant year and makes recommendations to the Director of the RIDEM.

Priorities for the 2016 LASA Grants Program:

1. Projects that support the growth and sustainability of small or beginning agriculture producers (including aquaculture producers) and fishermen/women.¹
2. Projects that foster new collaborations or share new information among Rhode Island food businesses, organizations, or enterprises.
3. Projects that support new products or new sales channels with clearly defined markets.

Eligibility Requirements

What are eligible activities?

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 seafood² for the purpose of sale and promotion;
2. Enhance the economic competitiveness of Rhode Island grown agricultural products and local seafood;

¹ A small farmer or aquaculture producer is defined by the USDA as one with annual revenues not exceeding \$350,000. A beginning farmer or aquaculture producer is defined by USDA as one who has not operated a farm or aquaculture operation for more than 10 years. There exists no federal definition for small or beginning fisherman/woman, and with the goal of the LASA program and priorities being to support entry or sustainability of such, we will consider justification by the applicant at face value. In either case, one must either be an owner/operator or substantially participate in the operation of the farm, aquaculture, or fishing business.

² For the purposes of the LASA Grant, local seafood will be defined as product landed in Rhode Island.

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 Grants 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. Capital grants from fishermen/women are not eligible for LASA funding.

Who is eligible to apply?

Non-profit organizations, farmers, fishermen/women, and producer groups are eligible to apply. 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.

How much can an applicant apply for?

- 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.

Where can I find the LASA Grants Program application?

The application can be found on the RIDEM website, Division of Agriculture page, under "Grant Opportunities": www.dem.ri.gov/programs/bnatres/agricult/grants.php or on the RI Food Policy Council website's LASA page at: <http://rifoodcouncil.org/lasa-grants-program/>.

Please note: the online application must be completed in one sitting. We recommend that you look at the questions and prepare your short answer responses and any additional documents for attachments ahead of time, before you begin to fill out the application form for submission. If you prepare answers in a word processing program such as Word, you should be able to copy and paste your answers into the online form.

If you choose to mail or hand-deliver your application, you may fill out the Word document version available on the above websites, though we emphasize that online applications are strongly preferred.

Grant Awards:

Award letters will detail the approved grant, terms, requirements, conditions, and next steps to be taken to close on the grant. Grantees will be responsible for interim and final reports for projects, with projects needing to be completed within 2 years from signing of grant agreement. Full grant awards will be provided after signing of grant agreements, prior to initiation of activities. 100% of the funding will be provided up front by or before August 2016.

Technical Assistance:

Technical Assistance sessions will be offered in January and February. We are confirming dates and will have details posted January 8th. This information will be available on the RI DEM website, as well as the RI Food Policy Council website. To ensure you receive notifications, please sign up for the RI Food Policy Council email listserve, sign up tool available at the bottom of any page on www.rifoodcouncil.org

The LASA Grant Program application will be discussed and questions will be answered at each of these sessions. Additional questions may be emailed to: info@rifoodcouncil.org. All questions submitted and responses provided will be posted publicly to the LASA FAQ section of the RI Food Policy Council website.

Grant Review and Timing:

All grant applications are due to the RI Department of Environmental Management by **11:59 pm on February 16, 2016**. Applications may be submitted online at <https://rifoodcouncil.wufoo.com/forms/s17hf9v118wur8g/> or mailed to/dropped off at the Division of Agriculture office: 235 Promenade Street, Room #370, Providence, RI 02908. (Please note that the Division of Agriculture office closes at 4:00 pm and may be closed for holidays and weekends.) **Online submissions are strongly preferred.** You will receive an online confirmation if you apply through the online application. The Division of Agriculture will send an e-mail confirmation when mailed or hand-delivered applications arrive at the office as long as an email address has been provided on the application form.

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.

Applicants are advised to review all sections of this request and to follow instructions completely, as failure to make a complete submission as described elsewhere herein will result in non-consideration of the proposal. Applications that are incomplete or not submitted by **11:59 pm on February 16, 2016** will not be considered.

If English is not your first language and you have difficulty understanding the materials here, please contact us at info@rifoodcouncil.org and we will try to help.

Applications will be screened for eligibility and scored based on Grant Guidelines (see attached scoring rubric), and recommended to the Director of RIDEM for award. The LASA Grants Program Advisory Committee has the ability to recommend an award amount different from the amount requested.

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 considered to be public records, 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 April 30, 2016.

Program and Grant Administration:

Program funds are to be co-administered by the RI Department of Environmental Management and the Rhode Island Food Policy Council, through the LASA Grants Program Advisory Committee. Chaired by the Chief of the Division of Agriculture, the LASA Grants Program Advisory Committee has ten total members, who represent 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.

Conflict of Interest:

Recognizing that the size of the Rhode Island community is such that many personal and business relationships between grant applicants and Advisory Committee members may exist, an Advisory Committee member will disqualify him/herself from participating in the action on a grant application where the Advisory Committee member has a close personal or professional relationship with the applicant, or has any other significant conflict.

Grant Request and Scoring:

Below is the Grant Scoring Rubric, which the LASA Grants Program Advisory Committee will use to evaluate each submission. If you would like to see examples of applicants who have been awarded grants in previous years, please see the LASA Showcase Booklet available at the RI DEM website:
http://www.dem.ri.gov/programs/bnatres/agricult/pdf/LASA_2015_PAGES.pdf.

Grant Scoring Rubric

The LASA Grants Program Advisory Committee reserves the right to award partial credit in any of these categories or sub-categories.

SCORE: _____ (50 points possible)

1. Nature of Proposed Project (19 points): APPLICATION QUESTIONS #11-13

- Does the project:
 - Support the growth and sustainability of small or beginning agriculture producers (including aquaculture producers) and fishermen/women?³ (up to 3 points)
AND/OR
 - Foster new collaborations or share new information among Rhode Island food businesses, organizations, or enterprises? (up to 3 points)
AND/OR

³ A small farmer or aquaculture producer is defined by USDA as one with annual revenues not exceeding \$350,000. A beginning farmer or aquaculture producer is defined by USDA as one who has not operated a farm or aquaculture operation for more than 10 years. There exists no federal definition for small or beginning fisherman/woman, and with the goal of the LASA program and priorities being to support entry or sustainability of such, we will consider justification by the applicant at face value. In either case, one must either be an owner/operator or substantially participate in the operation of the farm, aquaculture, or fishing business.

- Support new products or new sales channels with clearly defined markets? (up to 3 points)
 - Does the proposal seem technically feasible and economically sustainable? (up to 5 points)
 - Is there a clear need for the project? (up to 5 points)
2. Outcomes (10 points): APPLICATION QUESTION #14
- Is there a clear description of what success looks like for this project? (up to 5 points)
 - Is there a clear description of how the applicant will know what a successful project will look like during the project and be able to evaluate success of the project once it is completed? (up to 5 points)
3. Regulatory/Zoning/Legal Information (5 points): APPLICATION QUESTION #15
- Is relevant information about regulatory or zoning requirements for the project included? Has the applicant addressed potential issues to ensure the project would move forward? (up to 5 points possible; projects with no regulatory, zoning, or legal implications/requirements will be automatically awarded the full 5 points)
4. Budget (16 points): APPLICATION QUESTION #16-17
- Is the budget table clear and reasonable given the scope of the project? (up to 6 points)
 - Does the budget narrative clearly explain and justify costs identified in the budget table? (up to 10 points)