



AgriFIRST Grant Program

Filling out the Application



Program Overview



What is AgriFIRST?

- **Created in 2001, AgriFIRST is the Illinois Department of Agriculture's only value-added economic development program.**
- **Since the program's inception, more than \$3.7M have been awarded to more than 70 value-added agricultural projects throughout Illinois.**



Where do the grant funds come from?

Program dollars are subject to an annual appropriation from the Illinois General Assembly.



What is Considered an Eligible Project?


Any value-added project. Per the statute, value-added is defined as:

Processing, packaging or otherwise enhancing the value of farm & ag products or by-products produced in Illinois.



Who can apply?

Any person or agribusiness residing in Illinois that will or does process, package or otherwise enhance the value of farm products produced in Illinois is eligible. Individuals or companies with the intent to develop a value-added business in Illinois are also eligible if they are working with an in-state partner.



What can funds be used for?

- **Feasibility Studies/
Competitive Assessments &
Consulting-Productivity Services**
 - Applicants can apply for up to 50% of the cost of feasibility studies, business & marketing plans, market research initiatives, basic engineering/site development work prior to construction or legal and accounting assistance to formally organize a value-added business.



➤ **Technical Assistance**

- **Applicants can apply for 75% of the cost of technical assistance up to \$25,000. Same basic tasks that can be applied for under the first option; however, the major difference is this option is not a dollar-for-dollar match program.**



➤ **Capital/Construction**

- **Program will provide up to 10% of a project's total capital/construction needs for a project. Funds can be used for land purchases; construction or refurbishing costs; purchases of machinery or equipment; installation; repairs; labor and working capital.**



Are there restrictions on how funds are used?

**Grant funds cannot be used
for the following.**

- **Research and development**
- **To comply with the Illinois Livestock
Management Facilities Act**
- **Travel**



Is there a matching funds requirement to apply?

Yes ~ there is a matching funds requirement for each of the three categories of program funding. Specific information for each category follows.



Matching Funds Requirement continued...

Feasibility Studies, Competitive Assessments & Consulting/Productivity Services

**This option is a dollar-for-dollar match;
however, applicants have to provide
10% of what they are seeking in grant
dollars in cash the rest can be from
other sources.**



Matching Funds Requirement continued...

Technical Assistance

Applicants must provide 10% of the amount they are seeking in grant funds in cash. The remainder can be from other sources.



Matching Funds Requirement continued...

Capital/Construction

Applicants must provide 10% of the amount they are seeking in grant funds in cash. The remainder can be from other sources.

REMINDER: The grant only funds 10% of capital and construction requests. Applicants are responsible for 90%.



Application Specifics



Application Specifics

- **Applications must be typed or computer generated.**



December 11 • 5:00 p.m.

**Must be mailed or
hand delivered.**

- **7 copies of application are required.**



Preparing the Application



Application Cover Page


- Applicant: Name of individual or entity submitting request
(MUST match entity on W-9 form)
- Project Contact: Primary person responsible for ALL grant correspondence.
- Employer's I.D. # or SS#: Must match entity on attached W-9 form and applicant in top box on form.



Application Cover Page continued....

- **Grant Funds Request**
 - Amount of grant dollars requested.

- **Matching Funds Contributions**
 - Amount of any *cash* applicant is contributing to the project.




Application Cover Page continued....

➤ **In-Kind Contributions**

- Any service-related or additional contributions brought to project by applicant and/or other 3rd party participants in project.

➤ **Total Project Cost**

- Total of three prior lines added together.



Additional Required Materials

➤ Executive Summary


- 1 page overview of entire project**
 - Ex: We are requesting \$4500 to develop and complete a business plan for our value-added business. Specific grant fund requests include the cost of salaries for the consultant and the cost of the plan. Then add paragraph for each additional item to be completed with the funds. Conclude summary with what you hope this grant will help you accomplish.**



Additional Required Materials continued...

➤ Background/Justification

- Has any preliminary work been completed on the project – if so, what were the results?**
- Amount invested in project to date.**




Additional Required Materials

➤ Goals/Work Plan/Outcomes

Must include information on the following.


- Detailed description of project & anticipated results.
- Procedures by which work will be collected, analyzed & interpreted.
- Challenges applicant may know of that may impact successfully completing proposed project.
- State project outcomes/milestones.



Additional Required Materials

➤ Timeline


- Prepare a timeline for completion of each major component within the proposed project. For project comparison purposes use May 1, 2008 for your project start date.**



Additional Required Materials

➤ Relevancy/Impact

- How does this project benefit Illinois agriculture?**
- Economic impact of project – future business growth, jobs, etc....**
- Number of people/businesses impacted by project.**



Additional Required Materials


➤ Budget

- A budget page is provided – use it.
- Column totals on budget page must equal totals on the cover page of the application.
- **Remember to include expenses that will be paid out only after May 1, 2008.**
- If additional explanation is required; include a supplemental budget page immediately behind the budget page in the application.



Additional Required Materials


- **Project Partners**
 - **Include name/contact information for all stakeholders involved in project.**
 - **If applicant is a company; include name/contact for executive management team and board of directors.**



Additional Required Materials

- **Professional Service Contributors**
 - **If you know the vendor you will select to perform the work associated with the grant include this information on the provided professional service contributors form. If you do not yet know who that company may be; fill a form out indicating you do not know and if you are awarded a grant you will provide that information later.**

A sheet is required for each vendor.



Additional Required Materials

➤ Letters of Financial Commitment

- Letters of financial commitment provide assurance to the Department of Agriculture that contributor has agreed to commit funds/services to project.
- A letter is required from every person/entity providing matching and/or in-kind contributions toward this project.

Letters must accompany applications.



Additional Required Materials

➤ Letters of Support

- Letters of support are not required ~ if provided they must accompany application.
- Letters can be supporting business organizations, legislators, etc...that wish to inform application reviewers of their support for a project.

Letters of Support do NOT guarantee grant funding.



Additional Required Materials

➤ W-9 Forms

- Match the applicant listed on the cover page of the grant application.**
- Accompany the application.**



Tips for Successfully Applying for this grant & Other Helpful Hints





Tips & Hints

- **Follow application instructions ~ if forms are provided use them.**
- **Meet all program requirements – check to be certain all required materials are included.**
- **The Department may reduce a request. It is helpful to identify the priority of the individual expenses within the project.**



Tips & Hints continued...

- **Talk to other grant applicants or grant recipients try to learn from their experiences.**
- **Contact granting entity to determine if they provide any technical assistance relative to the application process.**



Application Review Process, Award Announcements & Post Award Responsibilities



Application Review Process

The Department has 15 business days to conduct an initial review of the application to verify all required documentation has been submitted. If there are deficiencies, applicant will be notified in writing and will have 15 business days to provide 7 copies of the additional required documentation to the Department. This review does not address the eligibility of a project it only confirms if all required material is in the application.



Application Review Process

It does not help an applicant to have someone call the Department directly on their behalf as it cannot be considered during the review process. If someone wishes to express support for a project they should provide an applicant with a letter of support which needs to be included with the original application.



Application Review Process

- **An internal review committee reviews all applications. To protect the integrity of the program the committee is not officially named.**
- **Do not have anyone call the Department on behalf of your project – anyone wishing to express support for a project should do so through a letter of support which must be included with the application.**



Application Review Process

- All applicants will be notified in writing if there project has been selected for funding. Project awards remain confidential and should not be shared until a formal announcement by the Department and/or Governor's Office has been made.



Post Award Responsibilities

- All grants will begin May 1, 2008 and expire April 30, 2009.
- Grantees will receive funds in one lump sum payment and therefore will be required to submit monthly progress reports. A report template is provided to all grantees and reports are due the first business day of each month.



Post Award Responsibilities

- **Grantees are required to submit a final report at the conclusion of the project.**

Reports must contain the following.

- **Project narrative outlining original proposed project, how project may have changed with grant funding level, successes, challenges & future directions.**
- **Include a copy of all work product paid for with grant funds.**
- **Budget Information Outlining All Expenditures** *(Contact IDOA for expenditure formatting)*
- **Additional information grantee** *(News articles, additional grants obtained, etc...)*



Questions

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