

Governor's Agriculture and Forestry Industries Development Fund (AFID) – Planning Grant Program Guidelines

Overview

The Governor's Agriculture and Forestry Industries Development Planning Grant Program (AFID Planning Grant Program) is designed to encourage local governments to think strategically about how they can better support and integrate agriculture and forestry-based industries into their overall economic development and job-creation efforts.

The AFID Planning Grant Program can also support innovative efforts by localities to assist their agriculture and forestry-based businesses and encourage the participation of local farm and forestland owners in these efforts.

Maximum grant amounts are:

- Single locality applicant – An individual applicant may apply for up to \$20,000 per grant application.
- Multi-locality applicant – Applications made on behalf of more than one locality may apply for up to \$35,000 per grant.

Applications will be accepted on a rolling basis.

Project Types

AFID Planning Grant Program awards may support one or more of the following activities:

- Implement innovative marketing or market development programs or strategies that assist agriculture or forestry-related businesses.
- Develop a strategic plan for agriculture or forestry economic development.
- Develop local policies or ordinances that better support agriculture or forestry-based business or agritourism.
- Create new plans, policies, or programs that will lead to the preservation of working lands.
- Fund feasibility studies, business plans, or other predevelopment work for projects that will have a significant and lasting positive impact on the local agriculture or forestry sector.
- Develop local initiatives supporting agriculture or forestry-based businesses, such as those promoting agritourism, local food systems, biomass heat, or those addressing food deserts, etc.
- Invest in the development of local agricultural development boards.
- Fund innovative entrepreneurship and business development efforts assisting Virginia agriculture or forestry-related businesses.

Applications may include requests for capital expenditures of up to \$10,000. Other projects not specifically addressed above may be considered if the project advances the interest of agriculture or forestry in the locality.

AFID Planning Grant Program awards are not intended for education or youth training. Applications primarily benefiting an individual, for-profit business are not allowed.

Eligibility

Funds shall be awarded as reimbursable grants to political subdivisions. Applicants cannot have more than one active planning grant at any time, excluding participation in multi-locality projects. For multi-locality applications, a single political subdivision must act as the lead applicant.

Match Requirements

The AFID Planning Program generally requires that the applicant provide a dollar-for-dollar (1:1) match to the project. However, Economically Distressed Localities are eligible for a reduced 2:1 match. Reduced match for multi-locality applicants may be evaluated by the Secretary under special circumstances.

- At least 50% of the applicant's match must be a cash match. These are funds that are newly committed to the project. A cash match cannot include previously invested funds or funding from other sources.
- Up to 50% of the applicant's match may be in-kind or composed of Other Match¹ funds, should they become available. The Secretary may evaluate Other Match¹ funding over 50% for Economically Distressed Localities. Please reach out to the VDACS team for more information.

¹ "Other Match" refers to outside contributions to the project by the following sources: federal grant awards, private foundations, non-profit organizations, and funds from the Virginia Tobacco Region Revitalization Commission.

Grant Administration

Awards will be made on a competitive basis based on the strength of a candidate's application. Applicants must follow the AFID Planning Program Application format and submit a grant budget form. Budget items must adhere to the Allowable/Unallowable Costs List (Appendix A).

The following criteria will be used to evaluate applications and make award decisions:

- Project Purpose
- Quality and completeness of the application
- Expected impact of the project on affected localities' agriculture and forestry-related industries
- Extent to which the overall effort and promised deliverables will improve local capacity to support on-going agriculture and forestry economic development beyond the term of the grant
- Likelihood of success in achieving the promised deliverables
- Demonstration of support from the agricultural community and affected local government(s)
- Degree of innovation and the likelihood that the effort may be used as a model for other communities

Application Requirements

To apply for funding from the AFID Planning Grant Program, applicants must provide a letter of support from their Chief Administrative Officers.

In addition, the program requires the active participation of a board, committee, or working group representing agriculture or forestry interests in the planning and implementation of a project in an affected locality. Examples of such groups may include an Agricultural Advisory Board, Agricultural Development Board, Agricultural and Forestal Districts Committee, or similarly composed board/committee/group.

Provisions regarding the board/committee/group overseeing the implementation of the project are as follows:

- The board/committee/group may be newly formed or previously existing
- The board/committee/group must include appropriate representation and expertise in the relevant areas to effectively carry out the purposes of the grant, including the affected agricultural and forestry sectors
- The board/committee/group must have broad support and participation from the affected agricultural and forestland community
- The board/committee/group must have the demonstrated support of the affected local government(s)

Grant Awards and Reporting Requirements

Applications will be accepted, reviewed, and awarded on a rolling basis from current appropriations and available funds; grants may not be committed from anticipated future appropriations.

An AFID Planning Grant Program award is a reimbursable grant. Once awarded, each grantee will receive a Memorandum of Agreement outlining the grant period and reporting requirements.

Grant awardees have two years from receipt of funds to complete their deliverables and may request an extension from the Secretary of Agriculture and Forestry for up to one additional year. Extension requests must include an explanation regarding the source of the delay and be made at least 90 days before the end of the grant period, or they will not be considered. Grantees are required to complete an interim grant report one year into the grant.

Reimbursements may be requested periodically throughout the grant period; up to 75 percent of the grant funds may be allocated prior to the end of the grant period.

Upon completion of the grant period, grantees are required to submit a final grant report including any grant deliverables, such as feasibility studies, and all receipts and invoices. The final reimbursement payment will be made upon verification of the final grant documents.

An application for a new grant will not be considered until the conditions of any previous grant are substantially completed. The Secretary of Agriculture and Forestry will administer the AFID Planning Grant Program on behalf of the Governor and will recommend grant amounts and required deliverables to the Governor, who will make final award decisions.

Contacts

Applications and inquiries may be sent to:

Rachel Meyers, Program Manager

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Email: rachel.meyers@vdacs.virginia.gov

Appendix A: Governor's Agriculture and Forestry Industries Development Fund (AFID) Planning Grant Program Allowable/Unallowable Costs List

Cost Category	Description, Guidance, and Exceptions
Advisory Councils	Allowable for costs incurred by advisory councils or committees, provided they are specifically fulfilling the purpose of the project and approved work plan activities.
Alcoholic Beverages	Unallowable for alcoholic beverages unless the cost is associated with fulfilling the purpose of the grant program, and either approved in the application or with prior written approval.
Capital Expenditures	Allowable subject to work plan and budget approval. Requests for capital expenditures can be made up to \$10,000. Expenditures must align with the overall project purpose and program goals.
Conferences	<p>Allowable if the conference is a part of the project's approved work plan activities. Allowable conference costs paid by the recipient as a sponsor or host of the conference may include rental of facilities, speakers' fees, costs of meals (see Meals for restrictions), and refreshments, local transportation, and other items incidental to such conferences with the exception of entertainment costs that are unallowable.</p> <p>Allowable to rent a building or room for training; however, where appropriate, VDACS encourages the use of technologies such as webinars, teleconferencing, or videoconferencing as an alternative to renting a building or a room. The recipient should use the most cost-effective facilities, such as State government conference rooms, if renting a building or a room is necessary.</p>
Contractual Expenses	Allowable provided that the services are explicitly relevant to the project, outlined clearly in the work plan, and are documented in accordance with generally accepted practices.
Education and Training	<p>Unallowable for educational costs.</p> <p>Allowable for training costs approved in the work plan or budget narrative, except for youth training, which is unallowable.</p>
Entertainment Costs	Unallowable. Entertainment costs include amusement, diversion, and social activities and any costs directly associated with such costs (such as bands, orchestras, dance groups, tickets to shows, meals, lodging, rentals, transportation, and gratuities).

Fines, Penalties, Damages, and Other Settlements	Unallowable for costs resulting from violations of, alleged violations of, or failure to comply with, Federal, state, tribal, local or foreign laws and regulations.
Fundraising and Investment Management Costs	Unallowable for organized fundraising, including financial campaigns, solicitation of gifts and bequests, and similar expenses incurred to raise capital or obtain contributions, regardless of the purpose for which the funds will be used. This includes salaries of personnel involved in activities to raise capital.
General Costs of Government (Personnel)	Allowable subject to work plan and budget approval. These costs must fall under the "Personnel" budget category and may include salaries and expenses of the local government body as they relate to the project activities.
Goods and Services for Personal Use	Unallowable for costs of goods or services for personal use of the recipient's employees regardless of whether the cost is reported as taxable income to the employees.
Insurance and Indemnification	Unallowable.
Lobbying	Unallowable.
Meals and Catering	<p>Unallowable for business meals when individuals decide to go to lunch or dinner together when no need exists for meeting continuity. This activity is considered an entertainment cost.</p> <p>Unallowable for breakfasts for conference attendees. It is expected attendees will have adequate time to obtain this meal on their own before the conference begins.</p> <p>Unallowable for meal costs that are duplicated in a meeting participant's per diem or subsistence allowances.</p> <p>Allowable for lunch or dinner meals if the costs are reasonable and a justification is provided that such activity maintains the continuity of the meeting and to do otherwise will impose arduous conditions on the meeting participants. Meeting and meal costs must be included in the approved work plan and budget narrative.</p> <p>Allowable for meals consumed while in official travel status. They are considered per diem expenses and should be reimbursed in accordance with organizational travel policies.</p>

Memberships, Subscriptions, and Professional Activity Costs	<p>Unallowable for costs of membership in any civic or community organization.</p> <p>Allowable for costs of membership in business, technical, and professional organizations in the approved work plan and budget.</p>
Organization Costs	<p>Allowable subject to project relevance, work plan, and budget approval. Defined here as those costs directly incident to the creation of a cooperative, agricultural board, or other organization.</p>
Participant Support Costs	<p>Allowable when provided in the approved budget narrative or with prior written approval for such items as registration fees paid to or on behalf of participants or trainees (but not employees) in connection with approved conferences, training projects, surveys, and focus groups</p>
Political Activities	<p>Unallowable.</p>
Pre-Award Costs	<p>Unallowable unless written approval has been granted.</p>
Printing and Publications	<p>Allowable to pay the cost of preparing informational leaflets, reports, manuals, and publications relating to the project; however, the printing of hard copies is discouraged given the prevalence of electronic/virtual publication means.</p>
Salaries and Wages	<p>Allowable as part of employee compensation for personnel services in proportion to the amount of time or effort an employee devotes to the grant project during the grant period under the award, including salaries, wages, and fringe benefits.</p> <p>Such costs must be incurred under formally established policies of the organization, be consistently applied, be reasonable for the services rendered, and be supported with adequate documentation.</p> <p>Unallowable for salaries, wages and fringe benefits for project staff that devote time and effort to activities that do not meet the legislated purpose of the grant program.</p> <p>Unallowable for administrative, severance or termination or other overhead costs without prior written approval.</p> <p>Unallowable for tuition or other educational expenses.</p>
Selling and Marketing Costs	<p>Allowable with conditions for costs that specifically align with the work plan/-purpose of the project and are required to meet the requirements of the award agreement.</p>

Supplies and Materials	Allowable for costs that pertain directly to the project execution and grant administration.
Travel - Foreign and Domestic	Allowable for travel, with prior approval and when costs are limited to those allowed by formal organizational policy and the purpose aligns with the legislated purpose of the program.