

Governor's Agriculture and Forestry Industries Development Fund (AFID) - Planning Grants Program

The Planning Grant program of the Governor's Agriculture and Forestry Industries Development Fund (AFID) is designed to encourage efforts by local governments to support their agriculture and forestry based businesses, and to give greater voice to local farm and forestland owners and their interests. The program requires the active participation of a board, committee or working group representing agriculture and/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. The program provides matching funds to applicants to do one or more of the following:

- Develop a strategic plan for agriculture and/or forestry economic development
- Develop local policies and ordinances that better support agriculture and/or forestry based business, agritourism, and other rural enterprises
- Create new plans, policies or programs that will lead to the preservation of working lands
- Fund feasibility studies, business plans and other predevelopment work for projects that will have a significant and lasting positive impact on the local agriculture and/or forestry sector
- Develop and/or implement local initiatives supporting agriculture and/or forestry based businesses, such as those promoting agritourism, local food systems, biomass heat, addressing food deserts, etc.
- Other projects that advance the interests of agriculture and/or forestry in the locality

Annual allocation: \$250,000

Max grant: \$20,000 per applicant or \$35,000 for a multi-jurisdictional application

Access to funds:

- Funds shall be allocated as grants to political subdivisions. Applicant cannot have more than one active AFID Planning Grant at any time, excluding participation in multi-jurisdictional projects
- Applicant must demonstrate participation from an agriculture and/or forestry board/committee/work group
- Applicant must provide a minimum local match of \$1 for every \$1 requested
- Multi-jurisdictional applications must have a single political subdivision as the primary applicant

Provisions regarding local match:

- In-kind donations, such as staff time, are acceptable for up to 50% of local match requirement
- Local match does not have to be in hand at the time of application, but a commitment that it will be provided prior to project completion is required (e.g. a letter from the County Administrator stating the funds will be provided from next year's budget).
- The following may not be used as part of the required local match: funds previously invested by the applicant; grants of moneys from other government sources, except for those moneys given by a locality to another political subdivision for the purpose of achieving the goals of the AFID planning grant program; and contributions from private interests.
- Funds from the Tobacco Indemnification Commission may be used for up to half the local cash match.

Provisions regarding the board/committee/working group overseeing the implementation of the project:

- The board/committee/group can 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 agricultural and forestland community in the affected locality
- The board/committee/group must have the demonstrated support of the affected local government(s)

Project Deliverables:

- The applicant must clearly explain the project purpose, the specific issue(s) to be addressed, why it is important for this project to be undertaken, what the specific goals or objectives of the project are, the particular deliverables of the project, and how grant funds and local match will be used
- 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
- Applicants failing to substantially complete promised deliverables in the time given will be required to repay the grant funds, and will not be able to apply for any additional AFID grants until repayment is made

Grant Administration:

- Program and funds will reside within VDACS, with funding recommendations made by the Secretary of Agriculture and Forestry to the Governor. The Governor will make final award decisions
- Applications will be accepted, reviewed and awarded on a rolling basis, based on available funds
- Determination of grant amount awarded and required deliverables will be made at the discretion of the Secretary of Agriculture and Forestry.
- Grants may only be made from current appropriations and available funds, and may not be committed from anticipated future appropriations
- Once awarded, each grantee will receive a letter from the AFID Fund Coordinator detailing requirements to be met before release of funds
- An application for a new grant will not be considered until the conditions of any previous grant are substantially completed or the previous grant is repaid by the grantee

Factors used in the Determination of Grant Amount and Conditions:

- 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
- Demonstration of the likelihood of success in achieving the promised deliverables
- Demonstration of support from the agricultural community
- Demonstration of support from the affected local government(s)
- Degree of innovation and the likelihood that the effort may be used as a model for other communities