

Virginia Food Access Investment Fund Frequently Asked Questions

1. When does the grant round open and close?

The grant round opens annually. For 2025 awards, the pre-proposal period is 12/1/24-12/31/24.

The full application period will be from 2/3/25-2/28/25 for both small- and large-scale requests.

2. What is the application process like?

The first step in the application process is to complete a pre-proposal and submit it to vfaif@vdacs.virginia.gov. The pre-proposal form can be found on the [VDACS website](#) and is intended to provide a brief overview of the proposed project and ensure that your project is a fit for VFAIF before continuing. Eligible pre-proposals applicants will be invited to submit a full application. Please note that **applications submitted without the prior knowledge of VDACS staff will not be considered.**

At the close of the grant round, the grant evaluation committee will review all applications and recommend projects for funding.

3. When will grants be awarded?

Awardees will be announced in the spring of 2025.

4. What is the average grant award amount?

For small scale projects, awards will range from \$10,000 to \$50,000 per project.

For large scale projects, awards will range from \$100,000 to \$250,000. Successful projects may apply for additional funding in subsequent years upon completion of the previous project.

5. Is there a match requirement?

No.

6. How will the grant funding be distributed?

The VFAIF grant is a reimbursable grant, meaning recipients will be reimbursed for allowable expenses once receipts have been submitted to VDACS. This process can take 30+ days.

VDACS will not look for grant funds to be returned unless the project fails to meet any of its proposed goals. To help ensure success, VDACS will work with grant recipients to establish periodic check points that will help grantees track progress toward their grant goals. VDACS will request a refund of any funds that are used for purposes other than approved project expenses.

7. What are the Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program (SNAP) and Virginia Fresh Match requirements?

All funded projects will be required to accept SNAP benefits and to participate in an incentive program, such as Virginia Fresh Match. However, a project does not need to have the ability to do so at the time of the application. VDACS staff can provide technical assistance to applicants needing to qualify to accept SNAP and offer Virginia Fresh Match.

8. What do you mean by underserved and low-income, low-access communities?

"Underserved community" means a census tract determined to be an area with low supermarket access either by the U.S. Department of Agriculture (USDA), as identified in the USDA Food Access Research Atlas, or through a methodology that has been adopted for use by another governmental or philanthropic healthy food initiative. You can use the following tools to determine if your community is a good match:

- USDA Food Access Research Atlas <https://www.ers.usda.gov/data-products/food-access-research-atlas/>
- <https://www.investinginfood.com/eligibility/>

9. Can a locality apply?

No, localities cannot apply, but applicants are encouraged to work with/get support from their communities. This can include working relationships and letters of support from EDAs, IDAs, and other community development agencies.

10. Does the retail component need to be in place immediately?

The retail component can be in the planning phase. This can be addressed in the workplan.

11. Can partners include Kroger, etc.?

Yes, though projects that demonstrate a history of community engagement, work in the community, and community support for the project will be prioritized.

12. Do you already have to have a business to be eligible?

Applicants can be in the process of creating a business that provides food access, but we will ask for a well-developed business plan as part of the application process.

13. Can applicants that have been awarded loans/other grants still apply?

YES! It's great when applicants can show multiple, diverse funding streams.

14. Can VFAIF funding be used as subawards?

No.

15. Regarding the community engagement requirement:

- **What constitutes sufficient evidence of "history of community engagement"?** This can be determined through phone calls and other correspondence with community representatives.
- **What types of documentation would best demonstrate community support?** Letters of support are the best documentation for this.

16. The guidelines state that an initial call w/VDACS is required during the pre-proposal process. Is that still the case?

No, at this point, we will primarily utilize email for communicating with interested pre-proposal applicants.

17. Regarding the 25% Virginia farmer sourcing requirement:

- **How is this 25% measured - by volume, dollar value, or another metric?** Usually by dollar value.
- **How do we document compliance with this requirement?** Reporting documents will be shared with awardees during onboarding.

18. What is a reimbursable grant?

This means that any expenditures you make will be reimbursed to you once all required documentation has been submitted to and approved by VDACS. This process can take up to 30 days.

*Note that awardees will not be reimbursed for purchases made prior to the beginning of the grant agreement.