

Virginia Food Access Investment Fund

Frequently Asked Questions

1. When does the grant round open and close?

The grant round opened on December 18, 2020 and closes on April 30, 2021.

2. What is the application process?

The first step in the application process is to complete a pre-proposal and submit it to program staff at the Virginia Department of Agriculture and Consumer Services (VDACS). The pre-proposal form can be found on the VDACS website [here](#) and is intended to provide a brief overview of the proposed project. Upon submitting the form, applicants should contact VDACS staff to discuss the pre-proposal. After an initial conversation with VDACS staff, the applicant will develop an application and budget. Applicants will have the opportunity to receive feedback from VDACS staff prior to submitting the final application. Applications that are submitted without the prior knowledge of VDACS staff will not be considered.

At the close of the grant round, the grant review committee will review all applications. A handful of grants will move to the second round, which will require those applicants to interview with all or part of the grant committee.

3. What is the interview process and why is it required?

The grant review panel will invite those applicants who are being considered for an interview. The interview allows the panel to learn more about the applicant and the project, and it provides an applicant the chance to make the case for their project and the potential impact it will have on food access in the community it serves. To meet the principles of Equitable Food Oriented Development (EFOD), a successful applicant will demonstrate a knowledge of and commitment to the community it serves. To this end, applicants should bring a community leader to the interview who can speak to their experience with that community. These may be formal or informal leaders. Interviews may be held virtually.

4. When will grants be awarded?

The first round of grant review will conclude by the middle of May 2021, with interviews scheduled at the end of May or the beginning of June. Grant recipients will be notified prior to June 30, 2021.

5. What is the average grant award amount?

In FY 2021, grant awards will range from \$5,000 to \$50,000 per project. Successful projects may apply for additional funding in subsequent years upon completion of the previous project.

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. To help with project costs, up to 25% of the grant award can be distributed at the beginning of the grant period, prior to the grant recipient incurring any expenses.

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. Additionally, if the grant recipient receives the initial 25% of funding up front and does not use it for approved project expenses, VDACS will request a refund of those funds, and no remaining funds will be distributed.

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 offer Virginia Fresh Match incentives. 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.

For further information on how to apply for a VFAIF grant, please attend one of the online workshops being offered by VDACS. More information can be found on the VDACS website [here](#).