

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

Grant Description

The Governor's Agriculture and Forestry Industries Development Planning Grant Program (AFID Planning Grant Program) (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 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. Projects addressing issues related to the COVID-19 crisis will be reviewed and awarded in an expedited manner.

Types of Projects

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, or 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.

Eligible Applicants

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 Grant Program requires a dollar of local match for every dollar requested from the Program (Total Match). This Total Match can come from two sources: Applicant Match and Other Match (described below). A minimum of 50 percent of the Total Match must be an Applicant Match. For economically distressed localities, an Applicant Match must comprise a minimum of 10 percent of the Total Match. Economically distressed localities are listed in Appendix A of this document.

An Applicant Match is a contribution to the project from the applicant itself and can come from two sources: Local Cash Match or Local In-Kind Match.

- A Local Cash Match must comprise a minimum of 50 percent of the total Applicant Match. A Local Cash Match must be funds from the applicant that are newly committed to the project. A Local Cash Match cannot include funds previously invested by the applicant or funds from other sources, including funds donated for the purpose of pursuing an AFID Planning Grant award. However, funds given to a Planning District Commission (PDC) by a locality may be considered a Local Cash Match when such PDC is the applicant and the locality confirms in writing that such funds are to be used for the proposed project.
- A Local In-Kind Match is a non-cash contribution to a project from the applicant, which can comprise a maximum of 50 percent of an Applicant Match. Examples include staff time of an applicant's employees or the use of an applicant's property for the project.

Other Match contributions to the project may be provided by the following sources:

- Funds from Virginia Tobacco Region Revitalization Commission
- Donations from non-profit organizations, including volunteer contributions
- Grants from private foundations, including challenge grants
- Federal grant awards

On a case-by-case basis, the Secretary of Agriculture and Forestry retains the ability to reduce the Applicant Match requirement or modify eligible sources of Other Match contributions to the project.

Grant Administration

Evaluation Criteria

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. Applications will be reviewed against the following criteria:

- 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

Application Requirements

In order 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/working 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.

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. The AFID Planning Grant program and funds will reside within VDACS. The Governor will make final award decisions.

Appendix A: Economically Distressed Localities

Accomack County	Lee County
Alleghany County	Lunenburg County
Amherst County	Mathews County
Appomattox County	Mecklenburg County
Bland County	Middlesex County
Brunswick County	Montgomery County
Buchanan County	Northampton County
Buckingham County	Northumberland County
Campbell County	Nottoway County
Carroll County	Page County
Charlotte County	Patrick County
Cumberland County	Pittsylvania County
Dickenson County	Prince Edward County
Dinwiddie County	Pulaski County
Essex County	Rockbridge County
Giles County	Russell County
Gloucester County	Scott County
Grayson County	Smyth County
Greensville County	Sussex County
Halifax County	Tazewell County
Henry County	Washington County
King and Queen	Westmoreland
King William County	Wise County
Lancaster County	Wythe County