

Michigan Department of Agriculture and Rural Development Farm Innovation Grant Program

(Updated 9/6/2023)

2023/2024 Program Guidelines

The Michigan Department of Agriculture and Rural Development (MDARD) is offering a grant opportunity to establish farm innovation projects. MDARD will accept proposals to develop and support innovative solutions to real, immediate, and future farm problems facing Michigan's food and agricultural industry. The grant funds are open to all in-state universities, colleges, community colleges, tech centers, technology incubators, and research centers.

Process:

Proposal	
Release Request for Proposals	September 12, 2023
Proposals Due	November 20, 2023 by 3 p.m. (EST)
JEC	
JEC Review & Scoring	November & December 2023
JEC Review Meeting	January 2024
JEC Project Pitches	January/February 2024
Award	
Announce Award Funding	February 2024

Funding Areas:

The Farm Innovation Grant Program will develop and support innovative solutions to real, immediate, and future farm, agriculture processing, and supply chain problems facing Michigan's food and agricultural industry in the following priority areas:

- Climate Smart Practices
 - Practices and technologies that work to mitigate the effects of climate change by reducing greenhouse gas emissions, sequestering carbon, or by other various ways of combating climate change leading to climate resiliency for Michigan's food and agriculture industry.

- Supply Chain Resiliency
 - Equipment enhancements, new technologies, or novel research that strengthens Michigan's food and agriculture supply chain.
- Food Processing and Farm Production Automation
 - Research and development of technologies for automation of agricultural production and food processing.
- Other
 - Consideration will be extended to applications that present compelling approaches to address other aspects of farm innovation, with particular focus on rural resiliency improvements.

Eligibility:

The grant funds are open to all in-state universities, colleges, community colleges, technology centers, technology incubators, and research centers.

Grant Criteria:

- All grant materials can be found at www.michigan.gov/mdardgrants.
- Grants will be awarded a **maximum amount of \$450,000**. Please submit applications in whole dollar amounts and round to the nearest \$100.
- Applicants must use the provided application form and all sections must be complete to be considered for review.
- All applicants must be registered as a vendor in the Vendor Self-Serve System with the State of Michigan prior to submitting an application. Registration can be completed here: <http://www.michigan.gov/SIGMAVSS>.
- This grant is a **cost-reimbursement** program. Grantees are responsible for costs until proper reports/invoices/receipts are received and reviewed.
- Grantees will be eligible for reimbursement up to three (3) times at specified dates, during the 24-month grant cycle, with the final reimbursement provided at the completion of the project.
- Each grantee will be required to submit written reports and appropriate financial documentation to MDARD for payment. Grantees may also be required to report on the outcomes and impact of their grant for a period of time (up to three years) after the grant period ends.
- Applications must be submitted via one email to mda-grants@michigan.gov by 3 p.m. (EST) on November 20, 2023. Include in the subject line the name of your organization. If you do not receive a confirmation of receipt from our office after 48 hours, please call 517-388-4540.
- All Grantees must be registered and in good standing with the LARA Corporations Division. Register here: [Corporations Division - Login Page https://cofs.lara.state.mi.us/corpweb/LoginSystem/ExternalLogin.aspx](https://cofs.lara.state.mi.us/corpweb/LoginSystem/ExternalLogin.aspx).

Grant funds **cannot** be used to pay for:

- Land acquisition
- Purchase of a building or facility
- Structural repair of building or facility
- Tuition cost will not be allowed.
- Indirect costs are **not** allowed under this grant program. Indirect costs are defined as the expenses of doing business that are not readily identified within the project but are necessary for the general operation of the organization and the implementation of proposal related activities.
- Equipment installed outside of the State of Michigan.
- Acquisition costs of general-purpose equipment or lease agreements to own (i.e., lease-to-own or rent-to-own). *General Purpose Equipment* means equipment that is not limited to technical grant activities. Examples include office equipment and furnishings, modular offices, telephone networks, information technology equipment and systems, air conditioning equipment, reproduction and printing equipment, and motor vehicles.

Project Review:

Projects will be scored on a 100-point scale with a variety of factors, including, but not limited to:

- A well-defined and focused project purpose – 15 points
- Overall impact of the project on the food and agriculture industry in the state of Michigan – 25 points
- Meaningful, measurable, and realistic outcomes – 20 points
- Strong budget, expenditures correlate with the work plan and scope of the project – 10 points
- Comprehensive plan of work, containing appropriate activities for the project and strong partnerships – 15 points
- The long-term sustainability of the project and the near-term and long-term impact in solving innovation needs of the industry– 15 points

MDARD will convene a Joint Evaluation Committee comprised of individuals with an interest in, and knowledge about, Michigan agriculture, food systems, and farm innovation gap areas. The department will require some projects to prepare and present a project pitch on the proposed project. The committee will score proposals and make recommendations to the MDARD Director.

All communications and inquiries concerning this RFP should be sent via e-mail to: mda-grants@michigan.gov.

MDARD reserves the right, at its sole discretion, to reject an application if it:

- Does not meet the program requirements including scope, eligibility, and allowable grant dollar use.
- Is received after the deadline.
- Is incomplete or missing any of the required forms, narrative, and budget.

- Does not follow the outlined application requirements.

Equal Opportunity

The State of Michigan and the Department of Agriculture and Rural Development prohibit discrimination on the basis of religion, race, color, national origin, age, sex, sexual orientation, gender identity or expression, height, weight, marital status, partisan considerations, or a disability or genetic information that is unrelated to the person's ability to perform the duties of a particular job or position.

To file a complaint of discrimination, please contact: MDARD Office of Legal Affairs, 525 West Allegan, Lansing, MI 48909, or call 517-284-5729.

You may also contact the Michigan Department of Civil Rights at:

Phone: 313-456-3700

Fax: 313-456-3701

Toll-Free: 800-482-3604

TTY: 877-878-8464

Email: MDCRServiceCenter@michigan.gov