



RFSI Grant Eligibility Guidance

JOB AID

RFSI grant opportunities aim to build resilience in the middle-of-the-food-supply-chain and strengthen local and regional food systems by creating new revenue streams for Michigan producers. Continue reading to learn more about the eligibility criteria of each available grant.



Purpose

There are two types of grants, Infrastructure Grants and Equipment Only Grants. An applicant can **only** apply for **one** type of grant. Learn more in the Overview of Available RFSI Grant Job Aid and Video found on the [Resilient Food Systems Infrastructure Grant Opportunity website](#).

The purpose of this document is to define eligibility requirements for the RFSI Grants and provide next steps for applicants that qualify. In this document, we will cover the following topics:

- Eligible Entities
- Eligible and Non-Eligible Activities
- Submission Criteria



Learning Objectives

By the end of this job aid, you should be able to:

- Understand the eligibility requirements for the appropriate RFSI Grant
- Understand next steps to apply for an RFSI Grant

Eligible Entities

RFSI Grants must be used for the purpose of expanding middle-of-the-food-supply-chain capacity for locally and regionally produced foods and offer more and better market opportunities and new streams of revenue to small and mid-sized agricultural producers, including those who may not have access to value-added opportunities or processing to meet market demand for premium or value-added products, such as underserved producers.

The following entities are eligible for Equipment and Infrastructure Grants made by MDARD:

Agricultural producers or processors, or groups of agricultural producers and processors.

Nonprofit organizations operating middle-of-the-supply-chain activities such as processing, aggregation, and distribution of targeted agricultural products.

Local government entities operating middle-of-the-supply-chain activities such as processing, aggregation, and distribution of targeted agricultural products.

Tribal governments operating middle-of-the-supply-chain activities such as processing, aggregation, and distribution of targeted agricultural products.

Institutions such as schools, universities, or hospitals bringing producers together to establish cooperative or shared infrastructure or invest in equipment that will benefit multiple producers middle-of-the-supply-chain activities (i.e. processing).

Additional eligibility criteria includes:

- All applicant businesses and organizations must be located in Michigan. Additionally, all project activities must take place in Michigan.
- This program is to support food system crops and products meant for human consumption.
- Ineligible products include meat and poultry, wild-caught seafood, exclusively animal feed and forage products, fiber, landscaping products, tobacco, or dietary supplements.

Eligible Activities vs Non-Eligible Activities

There are several activities that are ineligible to be assisted under the RFSI Grant. See chart below to understand what may qualify or disqualify an applicant.

 Allowable Activities for Funding	 Activities Not Eligible for Funding
<p>Hiring term-limited personnel to assist with project implementation activities</p>	<p>Acquiring real property (including land purchases), or any interest therein</p>
<p>Purchasing special purpose equipment. This includes the purchase of special purpose equipment for institutions or others that will benefit multiple producers through middle-of-the-supply-chain activities such as processing, aggregation, distribution of targeted agricultural product</p>	<p>Projects focused on meat and poultry processing or other ineligible agricultural products such as wild-caught seafood, exclusively animal feed</p>
<p>Analyzing potential facility upgrades and changes that meet regulatory requirements, obtaining design and/or architecture services, etc. (to the extent these costs are directly related to the project)</p>	<p>Activities that have received a Federal award from another Federal award program</p>
<p>Planning for Hazard Analysis Critical Control Points (HACCP) or other food safety or worker safety measures or equipment recommendations</p>	<p>Claim expenses that have been or will be reimbursed under any Federal, State, or local government funding</p>
<p>Upgrades or new facilities for processing specific agricultural products, such as: On-farm post-harvest processing, preservation, and storage/cold storage</p>	<p>Projects which have already received funding from another federal grant or subaward programs for the same activities. However, Infrastructure Grants may build on the successes of prior funding (Note: such as the USDA Regional Food Business Centers Business Builder subawards, to fund subsequent activities.)</p>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Post-harvest cleaning and grading; • Aggregator warehouse and storage, including cooperatives; • Purchase of freezing equipment, freezer, or cold storage; • Processing, canning, preserving and pasteurization; • Preparation and packing; • Drying, hulling, shelling, and milling; and • Cooking, baking, juicing, distilling, fermenting 	

Submission Criteria

Letter of Support

Letters of support are strongly encouraged. It should provide information on why the funding is important to stakeholders. Below are guiding principles for letters of support:

Comprehensive	Ensure letters are provided across the supply chain from grower to retail
Unique	Create letters that are unique and specific to your project
Relevant	Letters must come from those impacted by the project. For example, if an applicant is an apple grower, one letter of support may be from where they are sourcing apples
Contains 3 Parts	Includes opening statement that identifies the project/program where funds are being sought, one or two middle paragraphs that indicate the relationship of the writer to the effort seeking funding, and a closing statement

Evidence of Critical Infrastructure

Evidence of Critical Infrastructure is required if critical resources and/or infrastructure are necessary for the completion of the proposed grant project. Applicants must submit evidence that critical resources and infrastructure necessary to support the initiation and completion of a project are in place.

Critical resources and infrastructure can be facilities, land, structure, use of city street/parks, shared-use kitchen, and/or other resources that are essential for the proposed project activities. Land, structures, and other critical resources must be in place and in working condition at the time of application submission.

Applicants are required to submit a separate letter indicating the critical resources that are necessary for initiation and completion of the project and certify that they are in place and committed prior to the start date of the project using the Evidence of Critical Resources and Infrastructure Template, found on MDARD's RFSI Program website. This letter must be submitted with your application in the MiAgGrants portal.

Summary



Next Steps

Applicants should determine which RFSI grant program is best for their project. Some factors to consider:

- Infrastructure is for a larger grant amount, \$475,000. They require matching funds, environmental processes, and following the federal guidelines.
 - For more information on the Code of Federal Regulations (CFRs) that need to be followed, please review the [USDA Project Scope and Requirements](#).
- Infrastructure grants are longer-term commitments.
- Equipment-only is a shorter-term commitment that does not need to follow federal guidelines.



Summary

To be considered for a RFSI Grant, see checklists below:

Considering the Equipment-Only Grant?

- Do you fall under one of the five eligible entities?
- Do you operate under the eligible activities?
- Optional:* Can you submit a Letter of Support?

Considering the Infrastructure Grant?

- Do you fall all under one of the five eligible entities?
- Do you operate under the eligible activities?
- Can you submit an Evidence of Critical Infrastructure Letter?
- Optional:* Can you submit a Letter of Support?

Now that you understand eligibility requirements, review Understanding Grant Compliance Job Aid on the [Resilient Food Systems Infrastructure Grant Opportunity website](#) to understand requirements to receive reimbursement payments.