

Michigan Department of Agriculture & Rural Development Underserved, Value-Added, and Regional Food Systems Grant Program

2025 Program Guidelines

The Michigan Department of Agriculture & Rural Development (MDARD) is offering a grant opportunity to promote the expansion of value-added agriculture production, processing, develop food systems, healthy food access, and underserved business development within the state to enhance Michigan’s food and agriculture industry.

MDARD will accept proposals that are intended to establish, retain, expand, attract and/or develop value-added agricultural processing and underserved development in Michigan; expand or develop regional food systems; or expand access to healthy food, including farm markets, flower markets, urban & rural agriculture, and hoop houses.

Process:

Proposal	
Release Request for Proposals	April 23, 2025
Proposals Due	June 11, 2025, by 5 p.m. (EST)
JEC	
JEC Received Proposals for Scoring	July/August 2025
JEC Meeting	August/September 2025
Award	
Announce Award Funding	September 2025

An informational webinar will be held on April 30, 2025, from 10 – 11:30 a.m. via Microsoft Teams. You can join the webinar at the following [link](#). The link is also available on the general [website page](#).

Funding Areas:

Funding will be focused on the following types of projects:

- Urban agriculture
- Farm markets, flower markets, and hoop houses
- Food hub development
- Food access and education, including access to fresh/nutritional foods
- Value-added food processing and agro-tourism

- Innovation and equipment
- Feasibility studies; that lead to jobs/investment
- Outreach, education, and training

Technical Resources

The following entities were awarded funding to assist with collaborative planning and capacity building initiatives that advance efforts to address local needs including, but not limited to, development of business plans, grant management training, partnership development, and financial investment planning:

- **Michigan Integrated Food & Farming Systems (MIFFS)**
2438 Woodlake Circle, Okemos, MI
Jennifer Silveri
jen@miffs.org
Specialization: Business Management, Technical Assistance Network Development, State and USDA Grant Readiness for participants of the Farm Business Management for the Global Majority.
- **Growing Hope**
922 W Michigan Ave, Ypsilanti, MI
Julius Buzzard, 734-786-8401
kitchen@growinghope.net
Specialization: Application Assistance
- **Detroit Black Community Food Sovereignty Network (DBCFSN)**
8324 Woodward Ave, Detroit, MI
Shakara Tyler, 313-345-3663
styler@dbcfsn.org
Specialization: Application Assistance and Partnership Development
- **LEAP Coaching & Consulting LLC**
585 Camelot Lane, Pigeon, MI
Kelli Braun, 989-415-4366
kellibraun378@gmail.com
Specialization: Application Assistance and Develop Business Plans

Demographic

Applicants will be asked to self-certify that the entity is majority minority owned ventures:

- Beginning Farmer or Rancher: is an individual or entity that has not operated a farm or ranch for more than 10 years and substantially participates in the operation.
- Veteran Farmer or Rancher means a producer who:
 - Served in the United States Army, Navy, Marine Corps, Air Force, or Coast Guard, including the reserve component thereof; was released from service under conditions other than dishonorable; and:

- Has not operated a farm or ranch, or has operated a farm or ranch for not more than 10 years; or
- Who first obtained status as a veteran during the most recent 10-year period.

A legal entity or joint operation can be a Veteran Farmer or Rancher only if all individual members independently qualify.

- Limited Resource Farmer or Rancher means a participant:
 - With direct or indirect gross farm sales not more than the current indexed value in each of the previous two years, and
 - Who has a total household income at or below the national poverty level for a family of four, or less than 50 percent of county median household income in each of the previous two years.
- Socially Disadvantaged Farmer or Rancher means an individual:
 - Individual or entity who is a member of a socially disadvantaged group. A socially disadvantaged group is a group whose members have been subject to racial or ethnic prejudice because of their identity as members of a group without regard to their individual qualities.
 - Socially disadvantaged groups consist of the following:
 - American Indians or Alaskan Natives
 - Asians
 - Blacks or African Americans
 - Native Hawaiians or other Pacific Islanders
 - Hispanics

For an entity, at least 50 percent ownership in the farm business must be held by socially disadvantaged individuals

- Socially Disadvantaged Business: is 51% or more owned and controlled by one or more disadvantaged persons. The disadvantaged person or persons must be socially disadvantaged. “Those who have been subjected to racial or ethnic prejudice or cultural bias within American society because of their identities as members of groups and without regard to their individual qualities. The social disadvantage must stem from circumstances beyond their control.”
- Women-Owned Small Business: business type that is at least 51% owned and controlled by women who are U.S. citizens; and have women manage day-to-day operations who also make long-term decisions.
- Historically Underserved-owned businesses and entities owned by underserved communities: A firm at least 51 percent unconditionally owned by one or more members of an underserved group who are citizens of the United States. In the case

of publicly owned companies, at least 51 percent of each class of voting stock must be unconditionally owned by one or more members of an underserved group who are citizens of the United States. In the case of a partnership, at least 51 percent of the partnership interest must be unconditionally owned by one or more members of an underserved group who are citizens of the United States. Additionally, for the foregoing cases, the management and daily business operations must be controlled by one or more such individuals.

Grant Criteria:

- Grants will be awarded a **maximum amount of \$100,000**. Please submit applications in whole dollar amounts and **round to the nearest \$1**.
- Expenses for equipment items within the budget will be allowed for grant reimbursement from April 23, 2025, to the close of selected and awarded grants.
 - Equipment: Any tangible, nonexpendable, personal property directly related to the grant activities over \$4,999 per item. In the budget narrative, provide the basis of the cost estimate (e.g., price analyses, vendor quotes) for each piece of equipment, new or used, and its correlation to the purpose/goals of the project to justify your need for the equipment to be purchased.
 - All financial documentation and proof of payments must be kept and provided. No grant activities or budget expenses will be allowed prior to April 23, 2025.
- Applicants must provide a minimum 30% match or a reduced 15% match available for underserved entities (self-certification required).
 - The match is 15% (underserved, self-certification) or 30% of the grant amount you are requesting. For example, if you are requesting a \$100,000 grant, you must provide a match amount of at least \$30,000 making the total project amount \$130,000. If you are requesting a \$50,000 grant, you must provide a match amount of at least \$15,000 making the total project amount \$65,000.
 - Cash match and in-kind contributions are allowed. In-kind contributions are allowed up to and not to exceed 50% of the required 30%. In-kind contributions are allowed for the full 15% self-certification match.
 - Salaries may only be included up to 50% of the required 15% or 30% minimum match requirement. Salaries must be completed during the grant project period; they cannot be prior to the grant period or after the grant close date. Applicant must demonstrate that the time and salaries included were directly spent to support the project objectives and plan of work for the requested grant funding.
 - Travel costs are not allowed.
 - Awarded projects must maintain records that clearly show the source, the amount, and the period during which the match was allocated.
 - All matching funds must be:
 - Verifiable from the grantee's records; and

- Necessary, allowable, reasonable, and allocable to accomplish the project's goals.
- Match Commitment - The funds being provided under this grant require the Grantee to provide a funding match to secure a disbursement of funding. Project costs, grant amount, and match amount committed by the Grantee are identified in the Project Budget included in the Grant Agreement. If a Grantee fails to provide the match amount identified in the Grant Agreement, or if the total project cost for a completed project is less than the amount identified in the Grant Agreement, which leads to a reduction of the match amount, the Grantor may reduce the grant amount. The amount of this reduction will be communicated to the Grantee before a final grant payment is made to the Grantee. If total project costs are less than what is included in the Project Budget in the Grant Agreement, the Grantor will typically reduce the grant payment amount to a level that equals the percentage of the project identified in the proposed Project Budget that would have been funded by the grant payment. Under no circumstances will a grant payment be made if the Grantee fails to provide at least a 30 percent (15% if reduced) match.
- Only one proposal per applicant will be considered. Your organization may be a partner on more than one application.
- Two Letters of Support are required.
- Cost estimates for equipment purchases are encouraged.
- If you have received a MDARD Food & Agriculture Investment or Underserved, Value Added, and Regional Food Systems Grant in the last two years and it is currently open, you are not eligible for funding under the Underserved, Value Added, and Regional Food System portion of this grant.
- Applicants must use [MiAgGrants site](#) to apply for the grant, via the application. All sections must be complete to be considered for review.
- A MiAgGrants system resource page can be found by clicking on the link at www.michigan.gov/mdardgrants and clicking on Underserved, Value-Added, and Regional Food Systems Grants page.
- Up to 10% Administrative Cost is allowed if the grantee is a non-profit. Administrative costs are the grantee's allowable direct costs for the overall management of the grant.
- All applicants must be registered as a vendor in the Vendor Self Serv 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 18-month grant cycle, with the final reimbursement provided at the completion of the project and final site visit.
- 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 [MiAgGrants site](#) by 5 p.m. on June 11, 2025. You should receive a confirmation of receipt from MiAgGrants. If you do not receive a confirmation, please email mda-grants@michigan.gov.
- 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>.

Grant funds **can** be used to pay for:

- Kits for movable growing structures including Hoop Houses
- Walk-in cooler
- Display coolers
- Work benches
- Baking equipment
- Shelving
- Signage

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

- Land acquisition
- Purchase of a building or facility
- Structural repair of building or facility
- Purchase of livestock
- Fuel
- Insurance
- 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 proposal related activities.
- Salaries, wages, and benefits
- 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 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 not identified as special use.

- Travel costs

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/likelihood of succeeding – 15 points
- Overall impact of the project on the food and agriculture industry in the state of Michigan. Product sourced and produced in Michigan and capacity building/grower connection/increase in supply of locally available products – 25 points
- The social impact benefits for the project including providing employment opportunities for low-income workers; providing greater healthy food access; or providing economic opportunity in underserved areas – 10 points
- Meaningful, measurable, and realistic outcomes – 15 points
- Strong budget, expenditures are reasonable, allowable, necessary, and allocable to the work plan and scope of the project – 10 points
- The amount of match provided – 5 points
- Does the plan of work contain appropriate activities for the project and are they detailed to show how the objectives will be met in a timely manner – 10 points
- The long-term sustainability of the project and the near-term and long-term impact, including jobs and investment in Michigan – 10 points

MDARD will convene a Joint Evaluation Committee (JEC) comprised of individuals with an interest in, and knowledge about, Michigan agriculture, food systems, and value-added agriculture. The committee will score proposals, and recommendations will be made to the MDARD Director.

All communications and inquiries concerning this Request for Proposals 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 & 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