



State of New Jersey

PHILIP D. MURPHY
Governor

DEPARTMENT OF AGRICULTURE
PO Box 330
TRENTON NJ 08625-0330

JOSEPH ATCHISON III
Assistant Secretary

TAHESHA L. WAY
Lieutenant Governor

November 1, 2023

Dear Agricultural Organization and Food Systems Infrastructure Representatives:

The New Jersey Department of Agriculture (NJDA) is inviting applications for funding opportunities under the U.S. Department of Agriculture (USDA), Agricultural Marketing Service's (AMS) Resilient Food Systems Infrastructure Program. The NJDA was allotted a total of \$3,437,002 in competitive grant funding for projects that aim to enhance the capacity of aggregating, processing, manufacturing, storing, transporting, wholesaling, and distributing locally and regionally produced food products. These include specialty crops, dairy, grains for human consumption, aquaculture, and other food products.

Examples of Infrastructure Grant Activities:

- Expanding processing capacities, including adding product types, increasing production volumes, and supporting new wholesale/ retail product lines
- Modernizing equipment or facilities through upgrades, repairs, or retooling (e.g., adapting product lines for institutional procurement or adding parallel processing capacity)
- Purchase and installation of specialized equipment, such as processing components, sorting equipment, packing and labeling equipment, or delivery vehicles
- Modernizing manufacturing, tracking, storage, and information technology systems
- Enhancing worker safety through adoption of new technologies or investment in equipment or facility improvements
- Construction of a new facility
- Increasing packaging and labeling capacities that meet compliance requirements under applicable laws (e.g. sealing, bagging, boxing, labeling, conveying, and product moving equipment)
- Increasing storage space, including cold storage
- Develop, customize, or install climate-smart equipment that reduces greenhouse gas emissions, increases efficiency in water use, improves air and/or water quality, and/ or meets one or more of USDA's climate action goals

The following activities are not eligible for funding:

- Acquiring real property (including land purchases), or any interest therein
- Projects focused on meat and poultry processing, or other ineligible agricultural products
- Claim expenses that have been or will be reimbursed under any Federal, State, or local government funding
- Projects which have already received funding from another federal grant or subaward program may not receive funding for the **same activities** through an Infrastructure Grant. However, Infrastructure Grants MAY build on the successes of prior funding, such as the USDA Regional Food Business Centers Business Builder subawards, to fund subsequent activities

The NJDA requests that all interested organizations representing New Jersey's Food Systems Infrastructure industry submit project proposals via e-mail to deelip.mhaske@ag.nj.gov for consideration for this funding **on or before March 15, 2024 at 5:00 PM EST**. Any applications received after this deadline will not be considered.

To be eligible for a grant, projects must:

Serve middle-of-the-supply-chain needs, adding value and creating new and improved markets for locally or regionally produced food. The program's focus is on food system crops and products intended for human consumption, excluding meat and poultry products.

Entities Eligible for Infrastructure Grants

- Agricultural producers or processors or groups of producers/processors
- Nonprofit organizations operating middle-of-the-supply-chain activities
- Local government entities operating middle-of-the-supply-chain activities
- Tribal governments entities operating middle-of-the-supply-chain activities
- 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.

All applicant businesses and organizations must be domestically owned, and applicants' facilities must be physically located within the NJ states.

Infrastructure Grant Priorities

- Underserved farmers and ranchers;
- New and beginning farmers or ranchers;
- Veteran producers;
- Processors and other middle-of-the-supply businesses owned by socially disadvantaged individuals, as defined by the Small Business Administration (SBA)

Ineligible products include: meat and poultry, wild-caught seafood, exclusively animal feed and forage products, fiber, landscaping products, tobacco, or dietary supplements.

Matching Funds Requirement

Infrastructure grant recipients are required to contribute 50% of the total proposed project cost as a match to federal funding. This applies to all applicants except those who qualify for the reduced match described in the next bullet.

Reduced Matching Funds– Historically Underserved Groups

For **historically underserved farmers and ranchers**, or for other businesses that qualify under **SBA categories** of small disadvantaged business, women-owned small business, or veteran owned small business, the required match funding contribution or cost share is reduced to 25% of the project cost. The applicants must self-certify in their Infrastructure Grant applications to being eligible for this reduced match.

All matching contributions must be committed or secured at the time an applicant is recommended for an award.

Matching Funds and Letters of Verification

Each application must include the total amount of match and how it will specifically align with their requested funding. Additionally, applicants must submit one match verification letter for EACH cash or in-kind resource signed by the matching organization.

All proposed projects must follow a standardized format and comply with the enclosed guidelines.

Please see the enclosed application information. ***Once you submit an application, you should receive a confirmation of receipt via e-mail within 24 hours. If you do not receive that confirmation, please call or e-mail me. Please feel free to forward this application to other appropriate parties as needed.***

If you have any questions, please do not hesitate to contact me at (609) 913-6628 or deelip.mhaske@ag.nj.gov .

Sincerely,

Deelip Mhaske
Grants Administrator
Division of Marketing & Development New
Jersey Department of Agriculture
Phone: 609-913-6628 Fax: 609-984-2508
PO Box 330, Trenton, NJ 08625-0330

E-mail: deelip.mhaske@ag.nj.gov

cc: Joe Atchison III, Assistant Secretary and Director of Marketing & Development