



Community Foundation of the Virgin Islands

Overview of RFSI Program

The Resilient Food Systems Infrastructure (RFSI) Program is designed to develop and administer initiatives that enhance resilience in the middle-of-the-supply-chain operations while strengthening local and regional food systems. The goal of the program is to create more and better processing options for local and regional producers across the food supply chain. The USVI RFSI Program, prioritizes expanding capacity and infrastructure for the aggregation, processing, manufacturing, storing, transporting, wholesaling, or distribution of locally and regionally produced food products (excluding meat, poultry, and wild-caught seafood, among others).

In partnership with the US Department of Agriculture (USDA) and Agricultural Marketing Service (AMS), CFVI will conduct a competitive solicitation process to distribute funds across two grant categories. **The Infrastructure Grant Program** and the **Equipment Only Grant Program** will provide support to projects 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.

Summary of Funding

- **Infrastructure grants** range in value, from a minimum award of \$100,000 to a maximum award of \$500,000, with a 50% matching fund requirement (though certain [historically underserved groups](#) may qualify for reduced match of 25%).
- Simplified **Equipment-Only grants** range from a minimum award of \$10,000 to a maximum award of \$100,000, with no matching fund requirement. These will fund only equipment purchases (not associated facility upgrades, staffing, or other costs).
 - Applicants must submit documentation to substantiate the cost of each piece of equipment listed on their application.
- **Eligible applicants may only apply for one grant type** (Infrastructure or Equipment) and cannot apply for both.

Significance of RFSI Program in the USVI

The significance of the RFSI Program lies in its aim to enhance food processing options for local and regional producers across the territory. The primary focus of project funding is on expanding capacity and infrastructure in the middle of the supply chain, thereby strengthening the local food system.

The USDA defines the middle of the food supply chain as activities occurring after the production of the agricultural product but before the product is sold to consumers. These activities encompass the processing, aggregation, and distribution of agricultural products between leaving the field and entering the marketplace. Consequently, grant funds are ineligible for use in cultivations, harvest, or retail marketing of eligible food products.

RFSI Program Eligibility

Eligibility is open to domestically owned entities with facilities physically located within the USVI, including:

- Agricultural producers or processors, or groups of agricultural producers and processors
- Nonprofit organizations operating middle-of-the-supply-chain activities such as processing, aggregation, distribution of targeted agricultural products
- For-profit entities operating middle-of-the-supply-chain activities such as processing, aggregation, or distribution of targeted agricultural products, whose activities are primarily focused for the benefit of local and regional producers, and that meet the eligibility requirements of the SBA small business size standards are eligible.
 - For-profit entities must meet the eligibility requirements of the SBA small business size standards matched to industries described in the North American Industry Classification System (NAICS). For more information on these size standards, please visit [SBA's Size Standards webpage](#). For a quick check on whether your business qualifies, please use the [Size Standards Tool](#).
- Local government entities operating middle-of-the-supply-chain activities such as processing, aggregation, distribution of targeted agricultural products
- Tribal governments operating middle-of-the-supply-chain activities such as processing, aggregation, 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

Period of Performance

The period of performance will begin on March 1, 2025 and must end on or before December 31, 2026. Grant recipients may receive their award in partial payments rather than a lump sum, with installments tied to specific milestones outlined in their work plan, based on factors such as the grant size, activities, and risk assessment.

Reporting

Interim Reports

- Semiannual reports track and evaluate the project's activities, progress made in meeting the project's desired outcomes, and document expenditures. Semiannual reports are submitted every six months of the project's period of performance.

Final Report

- A final report is required after the completion of the grant project. Final reports summarize the project's activities and evaluate the project's ability to meet the desired objectives and outcomes. A final financial report is also required for the grant project. If a recipient completes the grant early, they may submit a Final Report in lieu of an Interim Report.

Matching Requirements

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 (see below). *All matching contributions must be committed or secured at the time an applicant is recommended for an award.*

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 using the Match Verification Template Letter which can be found on the CFVI website.

No match is required for Simplified Equipment Only Projects.

- 1) 50% match (If not qualified for Reduced Match below)
 - a) Example: Total project costs = \$1 million - \$500,000 in federal funds and \$500,000 in match.
- 2) Reduced Match of 25% of total proposed project cost
 - a) For eligible entities that qualify as [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.
 - b) Example: Total project costs = \$1 million - \$750,000 in federal funds and \$250,000 in match
- 3) Need Signed Match Verification Letters

Adherence to Federal Environmental Laws and Regulations

Infrastructure Grant recipients must comply with the National Environmental Policy Act (NEPA), National Historic Preservation Act (NHPA), Endangered Species Act (ESA), and all other federal environmental laws and regulations. CFVI is required to review projects for NEPA compliance prior to the award of subaward funds.

Funding Priorities

Territorial funding priorities based on community outreach:

- Expand capacity for processing, aggregation and distribution of agricultural products to create more and better markets for producers;
- Improve the capacity of entities to comply with federal, state, and local food safety requirements;
- Improve operations through training opportunities; and
- Modernize processing and manufacturing equipment

Federal funding priorities:

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

The RFSI program will focus on funding projects that:

- Expand capacity for processing, aggregation and distribution of agricultural products to create more and better markets for producers;
- Modernize manufacturing, tracking, storage, and information technology systems;
- Enhance worker safety through adoption of new technologies or investment in equipment or facility improvements;
- Improve the capacity of entities to comply with federal, state, and local food safety requirements;
- Improve operations through training opportunities;
- Support construction of a new facility;
- Modernize or expand an existing facility (including expansion and modifications to existing buildings and/or construction of new buildings at existing facilities);
- Construction of wastewater management structures, etc.;
- Modernize processing and manufacturing equipment; and
- Develop, customize, or install equipment that reduces greenhouse gas emissions, increases efficiency in water use, improves

Project Activities - Eligible and Ineligible

Allowable activities or tasks that could be part of such projects may include:

- Hiring term-limited personnel to assist with project implementation activities;
- Purchasing special purpose equipment, including 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;

- 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);
- Planning for Hazard Analysis Critical Control Points (HACCP) or other food safety or worker safety measures or equipment recommendations;
- Upgrades or new facilities for processing specific agricultural products, such as on-farm post-harvest processing, preservation, and storage/cold storage;
- Post-harvest cleaning and grading;
- Aggregator warehouse and storage, including cooperatives;
- Purchase of drying equipment, freezing equipment, freezer, or cold storage;
- Processing, canning, preserving, and pasteurization;
- Preparation and packing;
- Drying, hulling, shelling, and milling; and
- Cooking, baking, juicing, distilling, and fermenting.

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;
- Activities that have received a federal award from another federal grant program;
- Claiming expenses that have been or will be reimbursed under any federal, state, or local government funding; and
- Pay costs that have been or will be reimbursed by a third party
- While projects which have already received funding from another federal grant or subaward programs may not receive funding for the same activities through a RFSI grant, RFSI grants may build on the successes of prior funding
- Pay costs incurred prior to the date the Agreement is executed unless prior approval is granted
- Pay costs that support or oppose union organizing
- Pay costs associated with conducting research and development
- Pay costs or allow for current market value of property and equipment as eligible total project costs that only support existing processing capacity for a facility

All awards are subject to the terms and conditions, cost principles, and other considerations described in the [AMS General Terms and Conditions](#).

Competitive Review Process

Initial Screening

RFSI program grants will be awarded through a competitive review process. Once the application window closes, CFVI will screen all applications for administrative requirements, including timely submission by the posted deadline, confirm the application is responsive to the program requirements and priorities, applicant eligibility, and submission of a complete

application using the required application template. Applications will be evaluated by a committee composed of experts in agriculture, nonprofit grantmaking, and/or U.S Virgin Islands context.

Technical Merit Review and Scoring

Applications which pass the initial screening process will be forwarded to all panel members in the Evaluation Committee (EC). For each application, panel members will assign a point value in an independent review process. Once all panel members have individually evaluated and scored each of the applications, the scores for each proposal will be averaged to determine an application's final score. Final Scores will be listed in rank order from highest to lowest. Based on the total subaward budget, the EC will recommend a funding level for a project, which may be the same or less than the requested amount of funds. The EC will review the list, discuss, and confirm the recommendation of the top scoring projects. Upon completion of the competition, CFVI staff will submit its award recommendations to the USDA-AMS for its review and final approval. Staff will also coordinate with awardees to make necessary adjustments to their applications to obtain final approval.

Applications will be reviewed based on the following criteria:

- Project objectives alignment and intent
- Project achievability and work plan
- Project partners
- Project impact on market and community
- Fiscal plan and resources
- Alignment with funding priorities

Contact Information

Any inquiries on this RFSI Grant Program should be emailed to rfsi@cfvi.net.

Submission Procedure

A completed e-copy of the relevant application and supporting documents (Infrastructure or Simplified Equipment-Only) must be emailed to rfsi@cfvi.net and received no later than 5:00 P.M. Atlantic Standard Time (VI Local Time) on October 24, 2024. Applications received after the deadline shall not be processed by staff or reviewed by the EC.