

NYS Dairy Modernization Grant Application FAQs

1. *How does the grant work? When will I receive the funding to make the required purchases?*

The NYS Dairy Modernization Grant Program Grant Funds can be distributed as reimbursements on a quarterly basis with invoices and proof of payments provided. For equipment, funds will only be distributed once it is received, installed, and operational. Services such as electrical or planning help will be reimbursed after the service is finalized. Grantees shall report to FFGF not less than quarterly on the progress of the Work and provide backup documentation for any incurred reimbursable expenses. *No expenses incurred prior to the signing of an Agreement with the Farm and Food Growth Fund upon the notification of award will be reimbursed.*

2. *Is there someone who can help me with the online platform?*

For troubleshooting please reach out to us at dairymodernization@ffgrowthfund.org.

3. *How specific should my budget request be? Do I need to include actual quotes in the application?*

Your budget should be very precise and you should submit as much supporting documentation as possible. A Current quote for each piece of specialized equipment (and associated installation costs) is required. In addition, Scoring Indicator 5 is based on your budget and budget narrative / justification being realistic and sufficient to accomplish the work proposed, clear and concise, in alignment with each other, and demonstrating a well thought out project.

4. *How will my application be evaluated? What are the keys to a successful application?*

Page 13 of the [RFP](#) provides the Scoring Criteria for the grant program.

5. *I'm working with a grant writer, under whose name should the application be submitted?*

In the Individual Applicant Information section, you will be able to list both the Primary Point of Contact and the Business Owner. The email you use to sign up for the portal will be the main point of contact for the project. If there are any other parties that need to be in the loop, make sure you provide their contact information in the specified sections of the application. There is an additional section for applicants to list Technical Assistance providers that they have/are working with. Alternatively, that is where you may want to list your grant writer.

6. *Why is the minimum grant request \$50,000? Doesn't that exclude small farms?*

The NYS Dairy Modernization Grant Program is intended to support farm businesses of all sizes. For those farms seeking to implement smaller projects, our partners at the Northeast Dairy Business Innovation Center operate a number of grant programs that could be a perfect fit. Follow this [LINK](#) to see if there are resources available for your dairy operation.

7. *Are installation of or upgrades to milking parlors eligible under this grant?*

No, they are not. Any activities related to production are not eligible under this grant, even if they meet some of the grant priorities - eligible activities are related to storage, cooling, and transport.

8. *We are interested in applying for funding to connect our milking parlor with our dairy processing center. Is this an eligible expense?*

Parlor construction or upgrades would not be eligible, as they are related to production. Piping and cooling technologies that could be a part of upgrades for handling may be eligible under this grant, but anything related to milking or production is not.

9. *Would a Dairy-Farmer-owned cooperative adding off-farm raw milk storage to facilitate peak period capacity and increase efficiencies qualify for this grant?*

A project like this would be eligible only if one is able to demonstrate clearly in their application the benefits that specific farm(s) will receive as a result of this installation. If the application demonstrates how a specific farm or farms will benefit from the project, it may be eligible for funding.

10. *Are manufacturers included in this grant opportunity?*

This grant is primarily focused on individual producers and cooperatives. A manufacturer might be able to submit an application, as long as it meets the priorities of the grant and importantly, has equipment installations and benefits that pertain directly to the farms themselves. Any installation of equipment in manufacturing facilities only would not be eligible.

11. *We already installed a bigger milk tank and are paying on it. Are we able to apply for this grant for that?*

No. Any expenses incurred before you are awarded are not eligible for reimbursement. Your application would have to be approved for funding and an agreement signed with Farm and Food Growth Fund before any eligible expenses could be paid for to be reimbursed by this grant.

12. *Are Milk Tankers eligible expenses even though the RFP says no vehicles?*

Tankers are eligible equipment under the Dairy RFP, but tractors are not. The tractor would qualify as a vehicle.

13. *This grant has similarities to the NE-DBIC grant offering: <https://nedairyinnovation.com/grants/on-farm-milk-storage-handling/>. Is this grant program related to the NE-DBIC grant offering or is this funding completely separate?*

This grant, while similar to the DBIC grant, is separate and unrelated.

14. *Can this grant pay for costs associated with a new building to house a new bulk tank and for the new bulk tank?*

Yes, new bulk tanks and related construction would be eligible expenses under this grant.

15. *If I want to apply for a load out pump and a plate cooler, should I do two separate applications or roll it into one application?*

You must combine your requests in one application, as each applicant can only submit one application unless they are a cooperative applying on behalf of separate and distinct farms.

16. *Will applications be approved & funded on a first come, first serve basis, or will all applications received by the due date be evaluated and scored?*

This is a grant that will be scored after the closing date. All applications made will be considered equally and scored by a committee of industry experts.

17. *Can non-traditional dairy farms (such as farms on educational campuses) apply for this funding?*

Any entities that meet the definition of a farm as outlined in the RFP under New York State regulations, that need to update or install bulk dairy storage, cooling or transport technologies as outlined in the RFP, and meet two or more of the priority criteria in the RFP are eligible and would qualify to apply for this grant.

18. *One of the requirements if funded includes providing a "certificate of insurance listing the FFGF as an additional insured." Does this mean that the FFGF must be listed as additional insured through the duration of the contract, but once the contract is closed they can be removed?*

Yes - listing FFGF as additional insured only has to be in place for the duration of the project. When the project is fully completed and officially closed out, FFGF can be removed from the certificate of insurance. You do not need to provide the certificate insurance unless your project is approved for funding.

19. *Can the grant pay for an electric upgrade if the farm would need to upgrade to 3 phase in order to install new bulk tanks?*

If the electrical work is critical to the function of the requested eligible equipment, that would be an eligible expense under this grant.

20. *I am having trouble attaching documents - can I send them by regular mail?*

No - documents must be submitted digitally. The application has sections where you can upload files. If you are having trouble submitting your files on the application, please contact us at dairymodernization@ffgrowthfund.org.

21. *Is any documentation required to show that an applicant can pay for the project before being reimbursed?*

For this grant, we don't have a requirement for proof of funds, however there are questions related to whether you have secured any other grant funding or loans for this project. Additionally, as the grant is reimbursement based, we will only disburse funds after purchases are made.

22. *We are hoping to construct a new milk house needed to house a larger bulk tank - is this type of construction allowed?*

Construction is allowed as long as it is required for and related to the installation of new

equipment. See the eligible and ineligible expenses categories in the RFP for more details:
https://www.ffgrowthfund.org/files/ugd/bf84f0_4ccf611ac3cc45cdb245906bc4a807e1.pdf

23. *The RFP states: "Letters of Commitment are required in the event that a partner will be involved in carrying out any component of the project, and/or if the applicant ships milk, from the applicant's processor or buyer." Does this mean they need letters from the vendors doing the construction?*

No, letters from vendors are not required. That language is referring to anyone who may have a stake in the finished project, such as a processor, or who is providing resources such as land, real estate or donations - not contractors or vendors involved in the installation.

24. *If a farmer is able to get a cheaper quote after the application has been submitted, can this be updated or are they committed to using the same quote as when they applied?*

Often the exact costs and types of contracts and equipment can shift slightly throughout this process. When applying, give the closest approximation you can of all costs. Slight changes in pricing can be accommodated or amended post-award as long as the project and equipment are mostly the same. The awarded amount for the grant cannot be exceeded due to changes in price or equipment.

25. *I need help creating my application (beyond technical help)!*

It may be useful to get in touch with your local Cooperative Extension office, as they may be able to help you. Your county economic development office may also have resources. FFGF also has service providers we can connect you with to help you with grant applications, but they would charge a fee for their services. Please contact dairymodernization@ffgrowthfund.org with any inquiries.

26. *Can I apply for funding for equipment that we have already installed and paid for? What if I need funding sooner than the closing of this grant application period?*

Any activities that are paid for in any way before an official notification of award are not eligible for reimbursement. If you need funding more quickly, there might be opportunities for funding through the Northeast Dairy Business Innovation Center, linked here:
<https://nedairyinnovation.com/grants/>.

27. *Is there a collaborator role with the NYS Dairy Modernization Grant application portal?*

Currently there is no collaborator role enabled in our portal.

28. *Are there any templates you recommend for Letters of Support or Letters of Commitment?*

We do not have any templates as of this time. Letters of Commitment and Support must include the information requested in the RFP, which is as follows:

"Letters of Commitment should articulate project partners' or beneficiaries' involvement in the project and identify the contributions they will make to ensure the project's success, or how they will directly benefit from the activities proposed. This may include description of the resources that are available for the installation to be successfully carried out, or how the processor's relationship

will change with these improvements. Additional letters of support are encouraged. Letters of Support should demonstrate support from businesses, retailers, other farmers, organizations, or processors that are connected to or beneficiaries of the project, but not directly involved in carrying out the project. This may include demonstrating project feasibility or validating the benefits of any new equipment."

29. *Can we purchase storage for storage / cooling for finished pasteurized product?*

This would be potentially eligible for application based on the storage component. As this will be a highly competitive grant program, it's essential that you demonstrate how this project hits upon as many of the grant priorities as possible.

30. *Can I use grant funds to pay for a pasteurizer to reuse milk to feed to calves as a way of preventing milk dumping?*

Unfortunately, this project would not be eligible. The grant program is intended to fund projects that support on-farm milk storage and transfer technologies and infrastructure to improve dairy supply chain efficiency – getting the milk to market for human consumption.

31. *Can I request funding for a robot milker?*

No, milking technologies are production related and thus ineligible.

32. *Can multiple items be requested within the same application?*

Yes, we encourage this – we want to get a complete picture of your project in a single application. If you are applying as an individual farmer, you can only apply once, so you must combine your asks into one application. You can request funding for anything eligible under one application up to \$250,000, and should include all parts of your project in your application.

33. *Can an entity that has multiple farm locations with separate producer IDs only submit 1 application even though they have different sites and milking centers?*

Each business entity may only apply once, for a maximum of \$250,000. You are able to allocate those funds across multiple properties, however as each property is not its own stand-alone business, they cannot apply separately for the grant.

34. *Can cooperatives organized under the laws of a different state who have a presence in NY apply for this grant?*

Yes - we have made an addendum to the RFP and now define eligible cooperatives as follows:

For the purposes of this grant program, a cooperative means an association or federation or cooperative of milk producers organized under the laws of New York State **or registered as a foreign business corporation with the New York State Department of State**, having agreements with their producer members to market, bargain for or sell the milk of such producers, and is actually performing one or more of these services in the marketing of milk produced by their members, through the cooperative or through a federation of milk cooperatives in which the

cooperative has membership.

35. *Can a cooperative apply for milk tankers on our owner's behalf if the cooperative ultimately owns the tankers?*

Yes, a cooperative would be eligible to apply for tankers on behalf of your member farms. The application would have to clearly demonstrate the specific farms that would benefit / make use of the tankers, and they would have to be farms based in New York.

36. *The RFP states that Letters of Commitment are required from cooperatives, processors, and/or partners involved in carrying out the project. Does this include construction companies or contractors who will be performing work on the project?*

While letters are required from processors / cooperatives that a farmer works with, construction companies and contractors are not technically required to provide letters of support. Letters of support and commitment are required from project partners that have a stake in the finished project - so, cooperatives, businesses sharing the benefits of the project, etc. Parties involved in construction or installation are not required to submit any letters.

37. *How many letters of support can be submitted? Does the cap on letters of support submitted include any letters of commitment?*

Producers can submit up to three optional Letters of Support, as stated. Letters of Commitment are different than Letters of Support, so are not included as one of the three - a producer can upload Letters of Commitment as required, and then one, two, or three Letters of Support if desired.

38. *How do I indicate expenses for my proposed project that are in excess of the \$250,000 cap on grant funding?*

Our revised budget form in the application now includes a place to indicate the full cost of all supplies and equipment, as well as a place to indicate the portion of each expense you would like covered by grant funds. For expenses in excess of \$250,000, include them in the application, but be sure to not request more than \$250,000 in total reimbursement for partial coverage of those items.

39. *Are improvements to feeding covered by this grant?*

No, that would be production related.

40. *Is there a requirement in the grant to purchase new vs. used equipment? Or a preference used in scoring for new vs. used equipment?*

There is no requirement for new vs. used equipment in this grant - that is up to each applicant to decide. However, this is a grant based on modernization, with points awarded for efficiency. Because of this, there may be benefits to selecting newer equipment that is more energy efficient / modern.

41. *Is a trucking company that transports dairy but is not farmer owned eligible?*

No. Entities eligible to apply for this grant are farmer producers themselves, or farmer-producer owned co-operatives.

42. If we receive a quote that has a large discount applied, how should we describe this in our budget?

On the budget form itself in our portal, applicants should indicate the cost that they will end up paying for any equipment, that reflects any discounts taken off - since the grant will be reimbursing that which is actually spent.

43. What size dairies are eligible?

Any! This grant does not have a minimum or maximum size.

44. Can I apply for the grant now but do the work before it is awarded?

No, any work and payments must be made after an award is made and an MOU is signed.

45. When will grants be awarded?

We anticipate award announcements in late spring 2025.

46. Can a consultant apply for the grant on behalf of my farm?

You can have a grant writer or consultant carry out the application process for your farm. However, they must indicate you as the applicant and include all the details about your business and farm as the official applicant in the application.

47. Would new electric service be eligible?

If the electric upgrades are necessary to support new equipment or the broader project, that would be an eligible expense. Electrical services on their own would not be eligible - they must be related to implementation of an eligible installation to be included in your grant request.

48. How should improvements in energy or labor efficiencies be measured or described in the application?

This can be indicated in a number of ways - time saved, energy efficiency, etc. You can describe in your application the ways the equipment will be more efficient than your old equipment, how new installations will improve efficiency, how this will impact and change labor processes, etc. It's up to you to show in your application how the project will be impactful.

49. If storage includes a quality monitoring system, is the monitoring system cost eligible?

Yes, this may be an eligible expense, particularly if you are able to connect it to the priorities in the grant for efficiency or reducing waste.

50. *Can a cooperative apply for storage tanks would benefit all of their dairy farmers who own the cooperative, even if this number is in the hundreds?*

Yes – indicate as many specific farms that will benefit from the infrastructure and explain in your application the remaining farms that will be impacted, even if only in number. Connecting the proposal to specific farms is key.

51. *Can milk haulers that are independent businesses apply?*

Eligible applicants are those that are farmer owned. Third party haulers that are not farmer owned would not qualify.

52. *Do we need to provide quotes for every part of the project, or just the parts that are going to be covered by grant funds / reimbursement?*

We strongly encourage providing quotes for all parts of the project. They are required for any expenses that the grant will reimburse, and quotes for the other elements will give us the best picture of a realistic project. It will go a long way to strengthen your application and could be critical for competitiveness. Our scoring rubric also heavily emphasizes providing all supporting documentation, of which quotes would be included. Giving us the clearest picture possible for your project is the best idea.

53. *Who else other than processors are letters of support / commitment desirable from?*

Anyone who stands to benefit from the project or has a stake in the project can provide a letter of support. Other farmers, community members, organizations, or anyone else who can write a letter in favor of the project could be good options. Letters of Support are encouraged as they strengthen your application.

54. *Where can I find information about scoring and the scoring process?*

The RFP on our site contains details of how points will be awarded for what you demonstrate in your application. The process of scoring will involve a review committee of industry professionals who will review applications for strength according to the scoring parameters, as well as eligibility.

55. *Will project total costs affect scoring?*

No, we only ask this to understand associated costs, your awareness of the work involved in carrying out your project, and the impact of your project. The total project costs alone are not a significant factor in scoring. Please see the RFP for details about scoring information.

56. *Do you need us to provide assessments, like an energy audit for example, to demonstrate improvements in efficiency?*

This is not required, but anything you can provide to strengthen your application is welcome.

57. *Can construction activity related to storage equipment that has already been purchased be eligible for this grant?*

Possibly, though it might not be as competitive as an application. We can't reimburse you for

anything purchased prior to the awarding of this grant, but if you have work and expenses that you have not begun yet, you may be eligible to apply for them. If you can demonstrate the benefits of getting funding for that type of work and connect it clearly to the grant priorities, this may count as an eligible application.

58. Do site plans have to be engineered designs?

Any plans for site work, renovation, or construction must comply with local building codes. Please refer to your town / county building inspector.

59. How detailed does my application need to be in terms of financial outlines and concept viability?

As detailed as possible. The more information, accuracy, and clarity you can provide, the more competitive your application will be. The more complete an understanding of your project you can provide, the better.

60. How many letters of commitment and support do I need?

We require one (1) from your processor or cooperative if relevant. You can optionally include up to three (3) more beyond that for general support of project.

61. Should I include contingency expenses in the budget as a way of compensating for possible changes in costs and quotes that may shift in time?

No. Do the best you can to be accurate and realistic about your expenses, but money specifically requested for contingency is not allowable in the application.

62. Can expenses described in the application that we are NOT requesting reimbursement for be started or carried out before funding is released?

This is possible, as long as it does not include any work or equipment that you are requesting reimbursement for at all. You are also taking that work on at your own risk and your own expense, and we cannot guarantee you will be selected for funding as this is a competitive grant.

63. How closely does the work plan/ timeline of activities that we include with our application have to be followed?

The request to include a workplan and timeline is to help us see that you have a realistic understanding of the process involved in carrying out your project and how long it may approximately take. We recognize that your timeline may shift slightly as your project progresses.

64. Are there ownership or lease requirements for contracting, in terms of a farm being rented?

The landowner must approve the project being carried out.

65. Will we get email confirmation of your application?

Yes, the automated system should send you an email that says your application has been

submitted. If you did not receive that, please check your spam folder, and if it is not there please reach out to us and we can check that we got your application.

66. I have concerns about being able to fund this project, since it is reimbursement based.

We understand this and encourage you to explore funding options and demonstrate your efforts to do this in your application. There are a number of organizations (including ours) that may be able to connect you with funding or loans that are more accessible or have better rates for you.

67. Do you need to be on the contractors insurance policy?

No, our insurance requirement is for the business policy, and only needs to include us for the period during which you are implementing your project.

68. Can you tell me if my application is good?

While we are available to answer general questions during the application process, at no time is FFGF able to evaluate your application. We are administrators of the grant, and review of applications will be carried out at the time they are scored by an independent panel of reviewers. As administrators, we cannot evaluate your application on substance, but can only tell you that we've received it and it looks complete.

69. Should I itemize expenses in my budget or on quotes, or can I submit them as project totals?

Our budget form requires itemized expenses to be indicated. Expenses should be itemized wherever possible to give us the clearest understanding of your project.

70. I'm having trouble getting a quote from a vendor. What should I do?

In your application, please demonstrate that you've reached out to vendors (include dates, contact information, etc..) and communicate either that you're having trouble securing a quote, or provide close approximations of figures if possible. If you can show that you've done your due diligence and made the effort required to submit a well-informed project, this can strengthen your application even in the absence of a concrete quote and may increase your competitiveness despite the uncertainty in the market. The more detail the better!