



Statewide Agricultural Producer Association Grant Program Tennessee Agricultural Enhancement Program Application Guidelines - Fiscal Year 2015-2016

A. General Information:

The purpose of the Statewide Agricultural Producer Association Grant Program is to **increase income to Tennessee farmers by providing assistance for eligible activities of statewide agricultural producer associations across Tennessee.** These activities contribute to the education, training and marketing skills of Tennessee agricultural producers as well as developing markets for farm products.

Grants are available to qualified statewide agricultural producer associations in amounts up to \$3,000 (maximum). Total funding is limited and grant requests are competitive.

The Tennessee Department of Agriculture (TDA) is providing this opportunity through the Tennessee Agricultural Enhancement Program (TAEP). TAEP is a direct result of the State of Tennessee's continued commitment to supporting farm development and Tennessee's agricultural community.

Program Timeline	
Application Deadline:	December 15, 2015
Anticipated Approval Announcement:	January 15, 2016
Project Reimbursement Deadline:	November 30, 2016

B. Eligibility Requirements:

1. Grant funds are available to statewide agricultural producer associations for the purpose of increasing education, training, marketing and other approved activities. *(Local and regional groups are not eligible to apply.)*
2. Clearly identified and quantifiable performance measures should be a part of the proposal.
3. Grants will be issued to legally organized associations (501C3, city or county government, university, etc.) capable of receiving and managing state grant funds.
4. A local match is not required but will be a positive factor in proposal evaluation.
5. Applications must be postmarked no later than **December 15, 2015**.
6. Projects must be completed and reimbursement invoices submitted no later than **November 30, 2016**.
7. Activities must meet all federal, state and local building, food safety, and regulatory requirements.

C. Eligible Activities:

Emphasis is placed on activities that directly impact the greatest number of producers and increase agricultural economic opportunity. Projects should be innovative and must not substitute for existing programs.

1. **Eligible Activities** include, but not limited to:
 - a. Education, demonstration, and training
 - b. Expert speakers, training materials, and related educational items
 - c. Food safety issues
 - d. Identifying and utilizing new marketing opportunities for agricultural products
 - e. Increasing sales of agricultural products grown in Tennessee
 - f. Specialized equipment and infrastructure that result in increased farm income
 - g. Consultants, if approved in advance by TDA
 - h. Others, as approved by TDA

2. **Ineligible costs** include, but are not limited to:
 - a. Administrative and overhead costs
 - b. Paying off existing debt
 - c. Facilities
 - d. Purchase of property
 - e. Travel and other travel expenses related to the day-to-day operation of the organization
 - f. Salaries, wages, and fringe benefits of existing employees
 - g. Office equipment
 - h. Funds may not be used to pay for meeting or convention expenses other than travel expenses (airfare, mileage, lodging) for expert speakers, training materials, and related items as approved. *Expenses cannot exceed the State of Tennessee's Comprehensive Travel Regulations.***

D. Application Process:

1. Complete and submit TAEP Statewide Agricultural Producer Association Grant Application by the **December 15, 2015** deadline. Applications are available through the TAEP/TDA Market Development office at (615) 837-5346 or via e-mail at Jan.Keyser@tn.gov.
2. The application will be evaluated and ranked by a Tennessee Department of Agriculture committee. The applicant will be notified in writing of approval or disapproval for grant assistance. **Only projects approved in advance by the Tennessee Department of Agriculture will be eligible for grant assistance.** Approved projects must be completed and invoices submitted by the project deadline (November 30, 2016).

E. Application Evaluation Criteria:

Important considerations will be:

1. The overall soundness of the proposed activity's goals, objectives, project management and work plan. The project should have clearly identified and quantifiable performance measures.
2. **Priority is placed on activities that directly impact the greatest number of producers and increase agricultural economic opportunity.**
3. Applicant must demonstrate ability and financial capacity to conduct activity; successful and timely implementation and documentation of previous Tennessee Department of Agriculture grants is a factor in proposal evaluation.
4. Only applications that are complete and include sufficient information will be considered for evaluation.
5. As part of the evaluation process, a meeting with the applicant and/or a visit to the applicant's enterprise may be required.

F. TDA reserves the right to:

1. Consider each funding request on a case by case basis
2. Reject any or all requests
3. Provide partial funding for specific activity components that may be less than the full amount requested
4. Provide funding contingent on receiving additional information or testimony from the applicant
5. Waive or modify minor irregularities in requests
6. Require the applicant to work with TDA to complete all aspects of the application and reporting requirements

G. Contract Process:

1. A grant contract will be issued by TDA for each approved application. **Funding is not considered approved until the applicant receives an approval letter and a fully executed copy of this signed contract.** The Grantee may be required to submit various information including Federal W-9 (tax identification) and ACH (Automated Clearing House for direct deposit) forms when the contract is approved.
2. **Any changes to the executed contract**, including changes to the approved budget, must be submitted in writing and approved in advance by TDA.
3. The staff of TDA will monitor and evaluate each funded activity. TDA reserves the right to make site visits relating to the performance of the activity during and following completion.

H. Reporting Requirements:

Following the completion of the approved grant activity, the applicant will complete a **Project Summary** and return it to TDA. The format of this report will be specified by TDA. This report must include:

1. Activity Summary
 - a. Brief description of the completed activity and its objectives
 - b. Financial impact of activity to farm income and the community
 - c. Other benefits of the activity
2. Documentation (if applicable)
 - a. Receipts of actual expenses as outlined in activity budget
 - b. Proof of payment of expenses (i.e., cancelled checks)
 - c. Photographs of activities, equipment or facilities, built, purchased and/or installed
 - d. Copies of marketing materials produced with grant funding
3. Forms
 - a. Invoice for actual amount of reimbursement based on amount authorized
 - b. The invoice must clearly relate each expenditure to corresponding approved items in the application

I. Payments:

Following TDA review of the materials submitted, and if no additional information or site visits are required, the Department will process payment to the applicant.

J. Contact Information:

Please direct any questions concerning this program to:

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