



**Agriculture
and Markets**

ANDREW M. CUOMO
Governor

RICHARD A. BALL
Commissioner

REQUEST FOR APPLICATIONS

Southern Tier Agricultural Vineyard Improvement Plan

Information for Applicants

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I. GENERAL PROGRAM INFORMATION

A. Intent of Request for Applications (RFA)

The New York State Department of Agriculture and Markets (Department) through the Lake Erie Regional Grape Program (LERGP) invites applications from eligible entities for financial assistance to enhance vineyard operations. Funds may be used to remove unwanted vineyards and replant grape varieties or other agricultural crops. Availability of funding for this program is from the State Fiscal Year 2018-2019 Budget, which includes an appropriation for this purpose. Funding is subject to re-appropriation in subsequent state fiscal years.

B. Purpose

The purpose of the program is to assist Concord vineyard operations located in the Southern Tier Region of New York State (NYS). For purposes of this RFA, the Southern Tier Region is comprised of the following counties:

Allegany, Broome, Cattaraugus, Chautauqua, Chemung, Chenango, Delaware, Erie, Niagara, Steuben, Schuyler, Tompkins, and Tioga

C. Definitions

“Concord Vineyard” means an acre or more of land that was or is devoted to the production of concord grapes whether currently active or abandoned. The acre may contain both live and dead concord vines. For purposes of this RFA a trellis system in complete disrepair would still qualify as a vineyard.

“IPM Compatibility” Removal of vineyards that are not cared for reduces disease and insect pressure on neighboring vineyards and is compatible with an integrated approach to pest management.

“Neighboring vineyard” A vineyard less than one mile away from another vineyard.

“Qualified or accredited third party” means an individual or a business entity that is trained in the development of farm business plans, certified, and/or otherwise qualified to make educated and informed recommendations pertinent to the farm business objectives for the qualifying farm operation. Extension educators, Farm Credit Staff, Agricultural business consultants may all qualify.

D. Project Submission Requirements

Applications for funding will be accepted from October 15th 2018 until funding is exhausted or October 15th 2022. Applications will be considered in the order they are received.

Incomplete applications will be returned to applicants.

Applicants are responsible for the timely submission of their application. Applications will be accepted only during an Open Application Period.

The application can be found at lergp.com/vineyard-improvement-program/ and should be submitted online.

E. Question and Answers

Prospective applicants with questions concerning this RFA should present those questions to:

Attn: RFA VIP
6592 West Main Road
Portland, NY 14769
lergpclerel@gmail.com

All questions must be submitted in writing. (Email will be accepted.) Applicants should note that all clarifications are to be resolved prior to the submission of a proposal and review of the Q&A document is encouraged. A list of questions about the RFA, answers to those questions as well as any addenda to the RFA, will be added to a Frequently Asked Questions Document and posted to the LERGP website www.lergp.com.

F. Funding

1. Available Funds

- The amount of state funding requested for an eligible project must not exceed \$50,000
- The amount of state funding requested for an eligible project must not exceed \$1,500 per vineyard acre.

G. Match Requirements

1. Applicant Match Requirement
 - 50% of removal cost
 - 75% of replanting cost
2. Matching Funds
 - Cash
 - In-kind labor
 - In-kind equipment use

H. Project Duration

1. Removal projects should be completed within 12 months of an executed contract.
2. Replant projects should be completed within 36 months of an executed contract.

II. ELIGIBILITY REQUIREMENTS

A. Applicant Eligibility

Eligible applicants **must** meet **all** of the following criteria:

- Be in compliance with all federal, state, or local laws or regulations.
- Be in compliance with state, federal, or local tax obligations.
- Have ownership and control over a Concord vineyard. (*See definitions?*)

B. Project Eligibility

1. Eligible projects **must** meet the following criteria:
 - Increase production, enhance farm profitability and/or increase environmental compatibility of the farm operation or IPM compatibility with neighboring vineyards.
2. Specific Farm Business Plan Requirements must include, at a minimum, the following components:
 - A statement of purpose
 - A description of the farm business
 - An assessment of overall farm profitability
 - A description of potential strategies that have been identified as a mechanism for improving farm profitability
 - A description of the project proposed for funding and an evaluation as to how this project will address an identified strategy
 - An evaluation on how the proposed project will address profitability

C. Eligible Costs

Eligible expenses include, capital costs and professional services costs necessary to complete an eligible project. Eligible costs cannot exceed \$1,500 per acre.

The following capital and professional services costs are eligible:

- 50% of removal costs
 - Labor
 - Custom hire
 - Equipment use or rental
 - Land clearing
- 25% of replant cost
 - Trellis
 - Perennial plant material (vines/trees)
 - Labor
 - Equipment use or rental
 - Land preparation

Costs that are not listed may only be included for funding upon clarification/approval obtained through the Q&A process.

D. Ineligible Costs include, but are not limited to, the following:

- Machinery, implements, and rolling stock.
- Capital Equipment
- Working capital
- Livestock
- Insurances or Bonding Expenses
- Non-permanent root stock or nursery stock (e.g. annual bedding plants, container plants etc.)
- Refinance Debt, Taxes, Penalties or Fines
- Bank Charges and/or Loan Fees

E. Non Substitution of Funds

Program funds may not be used as a substitution for third party funding contractually or otherwise committed to the project.

F. Reimbursement of Eligible Costs

- Costs incurred prior to the award of funding will not be reimbursed.
- Eligible costs will be reimbursed upon completion of work associated with a contracted project.
- Costs incurred after the award of funding but prior to execution of a contract will be reimbursed after the successful execution of a contract. Costs will not be reimbursed if a contract is not successfully executed.

III. APPLICATION FORMAT

A. Application

- Only one complete application will be accepted per applicant.
- Sign and submit one complete application using the provided Application Form on lergp.com.
- Complete the Applicant Checklist.
- Identify all pages of the application in numerical order.
- Attach all required plans, support letters, necessary documentation etc. where indicated on the Application Form.
- To conserve paper, electronic format submission of business plans and Proposed Improvement Budget, are acceptable in PDF format.
- Provide all information requested in the application.

B. Project Budget

Submit the budget form included in the application forms.

IV. AWARDS

- Only one award will be given per applicant for the duration of the program.
- All applications will be reviewed for eligibility and completeness based upon the attached Applicant Checklist.
- All projects determined to be eligible shall receive funding for approved project costs until all funds designated for this purpose are exhausted.
- The Department will make all final eligibility and award determinations.
- Once an application has been selected for funding, the Department will notify the applicant of the need to provide information necessary to complete the contract.
- Priority for funding will be determined by the date an application is determined to be **eligible** and **complete**.
- In the event that insufficient funds are available to fund all successful applicants in a given application period, awards will be made to entities based upon the value of leveraged funding in comparison to state funding.
- In the event that there are not sufficient funds available to cover the amount requested in an application, the applicant will be contacted to determine if the project can be completed within the available funding.

The Department has reserved the right to evaluate the program after the first year for a possible redistribution of funds.

V. CONTRACTS

- A contract will be developed and executed between the applicant and Chautauqua County CCE.
- All payments will be issued as identified in the executed funding agreement with Chautauqua County CCE.
- LERGP staff will monitor the progress of each funded project.
- The (Department) and LERGP reserves the right to modify the reporting requirements during the course of the project.
- Successful applicants must provide progress reports and final reporting documentation and such other information as the LERGP may deem necessary.
- The Department and LERGP reserve the right to conduct follow-up evaluations of funded projects in order to determine long-term impacts.
- The Office of the NYS Comptroller, the Department, LERGP and Chautauqua County CCE reserve the right to audit the applicant supplied books and records relating to the performance of the project during and up to six (6) years after the completion of the project.

VI. OTHER CONSIDERATIONS

A. Liability

The Department, LERGP and CCE Chautauqua County will not be held liable for any costs incurred by any applicant for work performed in the preparation of and production of a proposal, or for any work performed prior to the formal execution of a contract.

B. Freedom of Information

All proposals submitted and all related contracts and reports may be subject to disclosure under the Freedom of Information Law.

C. New York State Environmental Quality Review Act Requirements

Some projects may be subject to review under the New York State Environmental Quality Review Act (SEQRA). Applicants should go to the New York State Department of Environmental Conservation web site <http://www.dec.ny.gov/permits/357.html> for further information regarding applicability.

D. New York State Office Of Parks, Recreation, And Historic Preservation Requirements

Some projects may be subject to further review by the NYS Office of Parks, Recreation and Historic Preservation (OPRHP) prior to development of a contract. The Department, reserves the right to request such additional information from applicants as is necessary to allow the OPRHP to make a determination regarding the impact of a project.

E. Reservations

The Department and the LERGP reserve the right to:

- reject any or all proposals received with respect to this RFA;
- disqualify any applicant whose conduct and/or proposal fails to conform to the requirements of the RFA;
- request from an applicant additional information as deemed necessary to more fully evaluate its proposal;
- amend the program's specifications after their release, with appropriate written notice to all potential applicants;
- waive any requirements that are not material;
- waive or modify minor irregularities in proposals received after prior notification and concurrence of the applicant;
- seek clarifications and revisions of proposals;
- select only certain portions of proposals for State funding;
- negotiate the terms of any agreement proposed by the applicant;
- negotiate the terms of the budget;
- eliminate any mandatory, non-material specifications with which all applicants cannot comply;
- make and award under the RFA in whole or part; and
- make all final decisions with respect to the amount of State funding and the timing of payments to be provided to an applicant.
- All eligible proposals submitted in response to this RFA will become the property of LERGP and the Department.