

**Appalachia Regional Food Business Center
Business Builder Subaward:
Application Packet**



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General Center Information

The Appalachia USDA Regional Food Business Center (ARFBC) exists to strategically build, innovate, and coordinate a fair Appalachian food system that cultivates health and wealth for all Appalachians. The Center offers sub-regional technical assistance via 16 Center Technical Assistance Providers (C-TAPs), many collaborators, and through its Business Builder Subaward Program (BBS). The fair food system we envision is characterized by:

- Farm and food businesses that create living wages and support people in building, sustaining, and remaining in their lifeplace of Appalachia;
- Fair structures that equitably benefit stakeholders and increase the viability of food businesses;
- Diverse, culturally appropriate, and ubiquitously accessible local food desired by consumers;
- An adaptable, strategically coordinated value chain comprising well-supported actors;
- Well-connected, financially-viable infrastructure for processing, aggregation, and distribution; and
- Supportive conditions for regeneration that increases the health of the region and its people.

In addition to the above attributes, ARFBC goals fall into three intersecting strategic pathways that make up our internal roadmap. The pathways are:

1. **Food and Farm Business Development** – develop viable food and farm businesses to meet consumer demand, enhance financial stability for farm and food businesses, increase the region's food supply.
2. **Market Access** – strengthen existing markets, expand new markets, increase food access for underserved populations, connect value chains.
3. **Strengthen Processing, Aggregation, Distribution (PAD) Infrastructure** – connect or strengthen existing PAD infrastructure, make infrastructure more accessible to underserved populations, create new infrastructure, enhance food safety.

Through its BBS Program, the Center provides financial assistance in amounts ranging from \$5,000.00 to \$100,000.00. Projects should be locally focused, align with ARFBC goals, and have measurable outcomes. The ARFBC will execute a total of five cycles of competitive awards with two parallel tracks, **Planning and Development (P&D)** and **Implementation and Expansion (I&E)**, described in the table below. Eligible entities are permitted to submit one application per round, and may apply over multiple funding cycles until the max funding per entity of \$100,000 is reached.

Eligibility Criteria

Find your C-TAP on our website.

Unsure which C-TAP to reach out to? You can reach us at info@applachiarfbc.org with any questions or requests for assistance.

BBS grants may support staff time, business planning activities, software implementation, the purchase of specialized equipment (such as food safety, processing and/or packaging equipment), value chain and supply chain coordination and innovation, product development, and marketing. BBS grants may also fund supply chain analysis and strategy development for identified gaps and specialization opportunities.

Projects focused on developing shared use kitchens and processing spaces, alternative forms of retail (such as a co-operative and/or consignment models for retail), food aggregation and/or distribution, or

bringing a new food product to market, as well as mid-tier food-related projects that will serve, or are based in, a distressed community **at the county level** as defined by the [Economic Innovation Group](#) are encouraged to apply.

While an entity can apply for both the P&D and I&E Business Builder Subaward tracks during the program, the maximum funds any single entity can be awarded is \$100,000.00.

A Letter of Support will be required as part of your application for the P&D track. Technical assistance may be required in order to obtain that Letter of Support. A Letter of Support isn't required, but encouraged as part of your application for the I&E track. Prior work with a C-TAP partner may count towards technical assistance in order to obtain a letter of support. Applicants must [reach out to a C-TAP to acquire their letter of support](#).

In the table below are just a few examples of ways the funding from both tracks can be used to help transform the food supply system. Please contact the Center or one of its partners for more information or to schedule a meeting to discuss your needs in more detail.

Business Builder Subaward (BBS) recipients must implement the approved project within two years of award date as stated on the grant award letter. **All projects must be completed by December 31st, 2027.**

BBS Track Breakdown:

	Planning and Development Track	Implementation and Expansion Track	
Track Overview	If you need technical assistance to help launch or grow a food processing or related business, need specific equipment to help your business grow, and need funding that is less than \$30,000 dollars, then the Planning and Development track is recommended.	If your project focuses on regional needs and the Center’s strategic priorities and/or has a need for funding that is \$30,000 dollars or greater, then the Implementation and Expansion track is recommended.	\$100,000 maximum per entity across grant cycles and RFBCs
Minimum	\$5,000.00	\$5,000.00	
Maximum	\$29,999.99	\$100,000.00	\$100,000 maximum per entity
Technical Assistance (TA)	May be Required	Recommended	Technical assistance may be required in order to obtain a Letter of Support. Prior work with a Center's partner may count towards technical assistance in order to obtain a letter of support
Letter of Support	Required	Recommended	In order to obtain a Letter of Support, technical assistance may be required
Priority Funded*	Yes	No	*Each of the five review rounds will fund the Planning and Development Track first, up to 33% percent of the total funding available for that round
Grant Review	Competitive	Competitive	

Eligible Applicants

Organizations and businesses (organized as either a non-profit or for-profit entity) that are small and mid-sized food and farm businesses (producers, processors, aggregators, distributors, and other businesses within the food supply chain) or support food value and supply chain coordination are eligible to apply for a BBS grant. A "small to mid-sized value chain business" is defined as Small (<\$350,000 gross sales) and Midsize (>\$350,000 but less than \$1 million gross sales).

A “value-chain” business is defined as a for-profit private sector or non-profit organization that is a producer (e.g., commodities, fruits and vegetables or livestock), aggregator, distributor, or food access point (food co-ops, farmers markets etc.).

Ineligible Applicants

Applicants who have previously received funding through governmental or non-profit grants, loans, or similar means for the same or similar Support Services or Equipment as stated in their application may still be eligible for the Business Builder Subaward. However, eligibility is contingent upon the inadequacy of their current Support Services. In such cases, the Business Builder Subaward may be utilized to enhance and expand the level of Support Services beyond what is currently being provided.

Additionally, applicants who have already received a Business Builder Subaward totaling \$100,000.00 from the ARFBC, or through a combination of funds from the ARFBC and other Regional Food Business Centers, should be aware that their eligibility for further funding may be limited.

Examples of Eligible Uses

INELIGIBLE PROJECT ACTIVITIES	ELIGIBLE PROJECT ACTIVITIES
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Are primarily for production-related expenses, such as farming guidance and production inputs (seeds, fertilizer, or ingredients for a value-added product); technical assistance to producers for business planning would be allowed. ● Are related to construction or purchasing land for use by a non-Federal entity. ● Benefit only one agricultural producer or individual (except for Capacity Building subawards and individual technical assistance). ● Depend upon the completion of another project or the receipt of another grant. ● Duplicate activities in a project that has received a Federal award from another Federal award program. ● Provide capital for revolving loan funds or seed equity funds. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Staff time ● Business planning activities ● Software implementation ● Value chain and supply chain coordination and innovation ● Product development ● Marketing ● Supply chain analysis and strategy development to identify supply chain gaps and specialization opportunities ● Special purpose equipment ● Rental costs of general purpose equipment when provided in the approved budget or with prior written approval. ● Vehicles may be leased but not purchased.

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The lease or rental agreement must terminate at the end of the grant cycle.

IMPORTANT EQUIPMENT AND CONSTRUCTION NOTE:

Business Builder Subawards **cannot be spent** on production inputs (seeds, fertilizer, or ingredients for a value-added product). Awards can also not be spent on tractors and non-specialized food processing equipment. Please contact the Center staff or a C-TAP for more information or to schedule a meeting to discuss your needs in more detail.

If the minor renovations involve any of the below, the project is **unallowable**.

- Ground disturbing activities;
- Vegetation or habitat removal;
- Alter a structure greater than 50-years of age or the general aesthetic of the property;
- An adjacent river, stream, or water body;
- Permanent increase in noise, odor, or traffic as a result of the project;
- Increase emissions of carbon dioxide, methane, and/or nitrous oxide (increased use of internal combustion engines, manure management, etc.)

Funding Information

Everyone that applies for a Business Builder Subaward is required to have a Unique Entity ID (UEI) through SAM.gov.

Prepare for the application process ahead of time by securing your Unique Entity ID now (or renewing your UEI if necessary!). A quick start guide can be downloaded [here](#) or preview an instructional video at our [website](#). Please contact us @ info@applachiarfbc.org if you require additional assistance with securing your UEI number.

The focus of the Business Builder Subaward (BBS) program is on providing assistance to small and mid-sized food and farm businesses (producers, processors, aggregators, distributors, and other businesses within the food supply chain) and food value and supply chain coordination.

Both subaward opportunities are competitive subawards and will be reviewed and scored accordingly. The minimum and maximum allowed awards for each type of subawards are indicated in the chart below. While an entity can apply for both the **Planning & Development (P&D)** and **Implementation & Expansion (I&E)** BBS during the course of the overall program, the maximum funds any one entity can be

The maximum amount of funds an entity can receive from any of the twelve centers combined is \$100,000.00.

awarded in total is \$100,000, in any combination of Business Builder Subawards.

Entities may apply to more than one of the twelve Regional Food Business Centers in the United States but are encouraged to apply within the region that would see the most impact from their award.

Planning & Development (P&D) Business Builder Award (BBS) Subaward - \$5,000.00 to \$29,999.00

The Planning & Development BBS Subawards are intended to enhance and expand the technical assistance and coordination efforts of the Center, and are designed for eligible entities that have previously worked with one or more of the Center's key partners and technical assistance providers, Center Technical Assistance Providers (C-TAPs). A Letter of Support from a C-TAP partner of the Appalachia Regional Food Business Center is required and should briefly describe the partner-delivered and center-funded technical assistance received by the applicant. The letter should also highlight the impact the proposed project will have on the food supply chain, as well as the applicant's readiness for the proposed funding. The ARFBC anticipates issuing around 36 P&D awards per funding round.

Planning & Development Applicants **must** reach out to a C-TAP to acquire your letter of support document.

Tip: If your project focuses on regional needs and the Center's strategic priorities and/or has funding needs of \$30,000 dollars or greater, then the I&E track is recommended.

Implementation & Expansion (I&E) Business Builder Award (BBS) Sub-Award - \$5,000.00 to \$100,000.00

The Implementation & Expansion BBS Subawards are intended for innovative projects focused on regional needs and the Center's strategic priorities. I&E awards are broader in scope than P&D awards and are thus eligible for up to the full \$100,000.00 award amount. While encouraged to submit Letters of Support from regional partners, applicants are not required to do so. Eligible entities that have previously applied for or received a Planning and Development award may apply for an I&E award in subsequent funding rounds. ARFBC anticipates issuing approximately 21 I&E awards per funding round.

The Center will ensure that the distribution of funds and outreach are distributed across the region in an equitable manner. While there are no distinct topical priority areas, additional points under the scoring matrix are provided for applicants that serve or are located in a distressed area.

ARFBC staff will provide written notice as well as email notice to each awardee, indicating the amount awarded, and next steps as necessary. Those that were unsuccessful in obtaining funding will receive information identifying deficiencies in their applications, so that they may be successful in subsequent BBS cycles. Applicants who do not receive an award during a particular cycle may be directed to receive business advisory technical assistance from a C-TAP.

Technical Assistance

When Technical Assistance is requested through a Center Technical Assistance Provider (C-TAP) or general inquiry, C-TAPs will reference a map of the Center's Technical Assistance resources. Technical Assistance requests will be assigned to the nearest C-TAP based upon geography. If no specific technical experience is requested or specified, then the nearest C-TAP based upon geography will be selected. That C-TAP can refer an applicant to another C-TAP if, upon further discussion, there is a specific need that is better served by another C-TAP with agreement of the applicant. Technical Assistance can range from general business planning and business plan development, to funding readiness and grant application assistance, to more specific technical assistance such as specific food processing training and marketing and sales assistance, or any combination of needed assistance. Multiple C-TAPs will work together with an applicant or general inquiry in order to provide the best possible assistance. It should be noted that in some cases, it may be possible for a C-TAP to provide a Letter of Support with an applicant requiring little to no additional technical assistance depending on the nature of the applicant's current proven experience, knowledge, and technical ability. The Center's goal is to assist applicants with additional skill sets and not subject an applicant to redundant assistance if it is not needed.

Business Builder Subaward Funding	Details
Amount Budgeted for Subawards	\$3,320,000 per round
Total # Expected Cycles	5 Subaward Cycles
Total # Expected Awards	36 Planning BBS; 21 Implementation BBS/round
Expected Minimum Award Amount	\$5,000
Expected Maximum Award Amount	\$29,999 Planning; \$100,000 Implementation
Number of Award Rounds, Per Year	2 rounds per year, opening in September and March
<p>This is a reimbursement-based grant and awarded funds are taxable. FFATA reporting will be required through the Federal Funding Accountability and Transparency Act Subaward Reporting System (FSRS) for subawards greater than (or equal to) \$30,000 and maintaining documentation of this process on a recurring basis. Your project begins when you receive notice of your award. Once awarded, you can begin spending towards your project. You can read more about Reimbursements here.</p>	

All projects must be fully COMPLETED by December 31, 2027.

Application and Submission Information | Cycle 1

	Solicitation Opens	Award Solicitation Closes
Cycle 1	9/3/24	11/1/24

All applications will be submitted via the Submittable web platform.

All applications will be submitted via the Submittable web platform. Organizations will make a free account on Submittable and will then have access to a virtual application. This program allows applicants to work on their application over many days, saving work and allowing for edits up until the solicitation period closes. A paper copy of

the application will be available upon request, and partners of the center can assist applicants in the Submittable process.

Applicants are required to have a UEI number to submit the application. Partners of the center can assist applicants in this process if needed. Additionally, applicants must have an annual revenue less than \$1 million and must be able to provide financial information (balance sheet, profit and loss statement, income statement, and cash flow statement), for your time in operation or up to 3 years if requested.

Applicants must have an annual revenue less than \$1 million.

For applicants of the P&D track, a Letter of Support from an ARFBC partner is required. Some partners may require technical assistance in order to obtain a Letter of Support. A template for the letter will be provided. For those applying to the I&E track, a Letter of Support is not required but is strongly recommended.

The application is a mix of short answer and long-format questions, detailing your business, your proposed project, the ways in which your project serves the region, and an outline of your budget. The budget will need to be itemized in a budget template (provided) and explained in a budget narrative. You will be able to save your work and come back to it through your Submittable account.

Application Review Information

All potential applicants are recommended to complete a Pre-Application Eligibility Questionnaire prior to gaining access to the full application.

All potential applicants are recommended to complete a [Pre-Application Eligibility Questionnaire](#) prior to gaining access to the full application. This short questionnaire is designed to ensure the

applicant meets and understands basic requirements and acknowledgements prior to full application.

The review and selection process is the same for each of the two Business Builder Subaward tracks. Once an application of either track is vetted for basic eligibility and completeness, it will be evaluated and scored using the attached scoring matrix.

Each Business Builder Subaward application will be scored by three reviewers; two “internal” reviewers who are representatives of each of the 18 funded partners at the Center, and one “external” reviewer who has expertise in the subject matter of the BBS grantee’s application. A completeness check will be completed by Center Staff once applications have been scored to ensure necessary documents and requirements are met. Once applications for both tracks are reviewed and scored, they are then sent to the ARFBC Business Builder Subaward Working Group; a small team of partners across the Center responsible for review, selection, and funding allocation.

Selected applications will be forwarded to USDA-AMS staff for final review and approval.

Reviewers will enter into signed agreements of confidentiality and fairness. Reviewers will disclose any and all conflicts of interest prior to their appointment to a review committee. Reviewers will be shielded from any and all identifying materials about the applicants to ensure fairness across applicants.

IMPORTANT NOTE:

Applications will be funded in the order of their score, with highest scores being funded first until all funds are allocated. If there is a tie at the end of funding, among like-scored applications, selection will be by double-blind random selection among the tied applications. Once all funding is assigned, the required information will be sent for USDA review.

Award Administration Information

Applicants will be notified with a letter indicating if they have been awarded or not. If your application is declined, you will receive notes with areas for improvement and suggestions on how to strengthen your application for another cycle.

For applicants who receive award letters:

1. Your project period will begin on the date shown on the award letter.
2. You will receive a **Subaward Agreement** to review and sign. This agreement details required information from the USDA as well as detailed information about reporting, reimbursement requests, award publicity, and more.

3. You will be required to submit an ACH form as well as a voided check in order to receive reimbursement payments during your project.
4. All reimbursement requests will be submitted through the project's Submittable platform. Requests may be submitted monthly or quarterly.
5. Reporting Requirements: After your award, you will be required to provide information to the ARFBC and/or USDA for program monitoring and evaluation. Depending on the amount of your award, you may also be required to submit various federal reports.

- Your Subaward Agreement will contain details about your specific reporting requirements.
- Your award requires you to submit semi-annual progress reports (Program Performance Reports - PPR) to the ARFBC; specific instructions will be identified in your award MOU/Grant Agreement and the Center can provide technical assistance on these reports.
- All subrecipients will be required to complete a closeout survey at the conclusion of their project period.
- Subrecipients may be asked for additional and more specific project and/or financial reporting information if needed.
- Subrecipients may also be required to participate in a USDA-led program audit. Given the length of the ARFBC project, a program audit by the USDA is likely with subrecipients chosen to participate by USDA grant managers.

IMPORTANT NOTE:

All project funds must be expended and claimed for reimbursement within 24 months of the date on the award letter or December 31, 2027 (whichever is soonest). Any unexpended funds beyond the project period may be reclaimed by the Center.

Supporting Documents

- [Application Ready Checklist](#)
- [Glossary](#)
- [Business Builder Subaward Tracks | Find Your Fit](#)
- [Budget Narrative Template](#) (File > Download)
- [Scoring Rubric](#)