



2026 Dairy Processor Grant Request for Proposals (RFP)

Applications must be received by 12:00 p.m. (noon) Central Time on September 17, 2025.

More information on the Dairy Processor Grant, including application materials is available on the DATCP website at https://datcp.wi.gov/Pages/Growing_WI/DairyDevelopment.aspx.

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Program Overview

The Wisconsin Department of Agriculture, Trade and Consumer Protection (DATCP) Dairy Processor Grant (DPG) strives to promote the growth of Wisconsin's dairy industry through grants to persons operating dairy processing plants, as defined by Wis. Stat. § 97.20(1)(h). The Dairy Processor Grant is available to processors for projects that are designed to do any of the following:

- Increase production, profitability, processing, marketing, or distribution of Wisconsin dairy products.
- Increase capital investment in the dairy industry.
- Apply new technologies related to dairy production.
- Improve the competitiveness of the Wisconsin dairy industry.
- Make more efficient use of farmland and other agricultural resources for dairy production.
- Create or retain jobs in the dairy industry.

The program is created by Wis. Stat. § 93.40(1)(g) and is funded by Wis. Stat. §§ 20.115(4)(dm).

This request for proposal (RFP) details all the information needed to apply. Please read through the evaluation criteria when preparing your proposals.

Available Funds

Funds will be distributed through a competitive review process. Grants will be awarded for projects up to \$50,000.00 and up to two years in duration.

This is a reimbursement grant. Grant funds will not be advanced; awardees must request reimbursement and provide supporting documentation and proof of payment for eligible costs being claimed.

Matching funds are required at 20 percent of the grant request. Matching funds expensed during the project must be documented in the same manner as proof of reimbursable grant expenses.

DATCP reserves the right to partially fund projects or award the full amount of available funds to a single project.

Program Timeline

Event	Date
RFP is released	August 5, 2025
Applications due to DATCP	September 17, 2025 12:00 p.m. (noon) - Central Time
Applications scored and selected by review committee	October 8, 2025
Selected applications notified by DATCP	Early November 2025
Anticipated project start date	January 1, 2026
Project end date (all projects must conclude no later than)	December 31, 2027

Eligible Applicants

Applicants must satisfy the following criteria to be deemed eligible for funding under this program.

- Operate a licensed dairy processing plant engaged in pasteurizing or manufacturing dairy products, or processing dairy products into other dairy products, for sale or distribution that is located in Wisconsin.
- Have a project that will make operational improvements, improve profitability, and/or involve a new process or innovation.
- Have no outstanding state penalties or violations and be in good standing with Wisconsin Department of Financial Institutions.
- Not be DATCP employee or a parent, sibling, spouse, or child of a DATCP employee.

Preference may be given to applicants who do not have an open grant with DATCP's Division of Agricultural Development (DAD) as of the close of the application period. DATCP DAD grant programs include Dairy Processor Grant, Meat Processor Infrastructure Grant, Specialty Crop Block Grant, Buy Local Buy Wisconsin, and the Resilient Food Systems Infrastructure Grant.

Each applicant must designate as a contract signer an individual who has authority to sign a contract with DATCP on its behalf. Each applicant must also designate a principal investigator who will be the primary point of contact for communications and reporting for the grant. Each applicant, including co-applicants, must demonstrate a proven ability to carry out all elements of the proposed project. Preference will be given to projects whose lead person or entity has a proven track record of grant management and/or a long-standing track record of strong fiscal experience and capability. Employees of DATCP and their immediate family members (i.e., parents, siblings, spouses, and children) are not eligible to receive a grant or participate as a project collaborator.

Eligible Projects

The Dairy Processor Grant is designed to provide access to services and resources for proposed dairy processing plant projects that enhance or develop the current business, solve an existing problem or concern at the plant, improve production or profitability, and/or help the processor innovate. Focal areas for the grant are highlighted below. Projects could include multiple aspects from the following areas:

- Dairy plant modernization and expansion efforts to provide assistance with professional services costs related to siting, engineering, design, or layout of new facilities or production lines.
- Food safety: consulting services to help pass a food safety audit or certificate needed to meet a customer driven market requirement.
- Training of plant staff on food safety requirements, new technology, etc.
- Assistance for related professional services and consultants: developing new processes, wastewater treatment or handling, new uses for whey, or other product or process innovations.
- Efforts to improve/enhance staff retention, training, supervisory skills, and knowledge.
- Other dairy processing projects may be considered.

Projects will only be reimbursed for project costs incurred during the project period.

Budget and Expenses Detail

Eligible Expenses (including but are not limited to):

- Operating expenses directly related to the grant project, including expenses for salaries and wages, contract and consulting services.
- Training costs to improve employee skills. For example: food safety, skills for operating new technology, or managerial training.

- Equipment rental.
- Supplies, defined as items whose full acquisition cost is \$9,999.99 or less per item or equipment whose full value is fully depreciable in one year.
- Applicable ground transportation costs such as vehicle rental costs, taxi/rideshare fares, necessary parking or mileage reimbursement. Current Wisconsin mileage reimbursement rate for use of a vehicle is \$0.51/mile, please see the state's [Pocket Travel Guide](#) for basic reimbursement limits. Travel must be directly related to project related activities.

Ineligible Expenses *(including but are not limited to):*

- Administrative or overhead costs not directly related to the grant project.
- Real estate purchases.
- Repayment of loans or mortgages.
- Rent or contract payments for time periods extending beyond the term of the grant contract.
- Equipment purchases, items that have a per-unit acquisition cost of \$10,000.00 or more and whose full value is depreciable over more than one year.
- Advertising expenses.
- Airfare, hotel, meals, and per diems.
- Legal fees.
- Lobbying, fundraising, or other political activity.
- Any costs incurred by any firm 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.

Matching Funds

Matching funds are required at 20 percent of the grant request (e.g., \$50,000.00 grant request would require \$10,000.00 minimum in matching funds for a total project budget of \$60,000.00). Matching funds must also be eligible project expenses. Items not included in the submitted budget are not eligible for match.

Submissions

The application form is located on the DATCP website at:

https://datcp.wi.gov/Pages/Growing_WI/DairyDevelopment.aspx.

Applications received after this deadline will not be considered for funding. The Wisconsin Department of Agriculture, Trade and Consumer Protection (DATCP) encourages submitting proposals early to ensure it is received prior to the deadline. Incomplete applications with unanswered questions or missing letters of commitment may not be considered for funding.

Applications must be received by 12:00 p.m. (noon) Central Time on September 17, 2025. Emailed applications should be sent to DATCPDADGrants@wisconsin.gov.

Review Process and Evaluation Criteria

This is a competitive grant. Each proposal must include sufficient information to allow the reviewers to evaluate the proposal. Each complete and on-time proposal will be reviewed by a committee and will receive a rating based on scoring criteria outlined in the Evaluation Criteria, with the maximum score being 100. The rating score will determine the proposals to be funded.

Preference may be given for proposals that demonstrate an industry-wide benefit, involve a new process, or show innovation. DATCP may require additional information and/or a plant visit to review the proposed project.

Evaluation Criteria

Grant Application (10 points)

- Is the project well organized, thought out, and explained in a way that makes sense and sounds like it can be carried out successfully?
- Does the proposal comply with the RFP?

Statement of need (35 points)

- How well does the proposed project support at least one of the program objectives of:
 - increasing production, profitability, processing, marketing, or distribution of Wisconsin dairy products?
 - increasing capital investment in the dairy industry?
 - applying new technologies or practices related to dairy processing?
 - improving competitive position of the Wisconsin dairy industry?
 - using farmland and agricultural resources more efficiently for dairy industry?
 - creating or retaining employment in the dairy industry?
- How well does the Project Summary describe an industry need, opportunity, or innovation?
- Is the project important and timely?
- Is the project viable?

Activities and Outcomes (25 points)

- Does the applicant have the necessary management and technical acumen to carry out the proposed project? Is the person(s) involved qualified to carry out the project?
- Do the outcomes fit the project activities and show that the project met the need or purpose?
- How well do activities result in at least one positive outcome of the grant:
 - Facilitate operational changes to the dairy plant
 - Improve profitability of the operation
 - Improve technical knowledge capacity of the staff and operation
 - Model a new process or innovation
 - Demonstrate or test a system to address dairy plant wastewater management
- Does the applicant possess the necessary financial capacity to complete the project as proposed, including the capacity to provide the required matching funds?

Budget (20 points)

- How well does each item in the budget relate to the described project?
- Is each item necessary to achieve the outcome?
- Is total amount justifiable for the return on investment?
- How reasonable are costs for each item?
- Does the proposal adequately identify project expenses including those paid for with grant or loan funds?
- Is the Project Plan and Budget adequate and reasonable? Is the timeline reasonable?

Extra Points (10 points)

- How much industry-wide benefit does the project provide?
- Does the project involve a new or innovative process?

Grant Recipient Requirements

Contracts

DATCP will develop a contract for each funded project, which will be signed by DATCP and the recipient.

No funding commitment is final until the contract is signed by the grant recipient and DATCP. To be

included with the contract, the grantee may be asked to provide additional information to finalize the details of the work plan, timeline, budget, and implementation plan beyond the grant application information.

The original term of the contract will be for two years. DATCP may, upon request, extend the contract to no later than December 31, 2028. Project extension request must be submitted at least three months prior to the end of the performance period.

Grant contracts must be signed and returned to DATCP within 30 days of receipt. Failure to submit an executed copy of the contract within 30 days of receipt may result in the loss of awarded grant funds unless the delay is approved by DATCP. Cost incurred during the performance period but prior to a fully executed contract may be eligible for reimbursement on a case-by-case basis. DATCP cannot guarantee payment of any eligible costs prior to a fully executed contract, any cost or activity will be completed at the risk of the recipient organization.

Monitoring

DATCP reserves the right to monitor grant recipients' performance to ensure that work is progressing within the required period and that fiscal procedures are followed accurately and appropriately. Monitoring may include site visits and review of recipients' financial records related to grant-funded activities. The Department reserves the right to monitor recipients' performance after the project's conclusion or the contract's expiration.

Payments

This is a reimbursement grant. Recipients must submit at least two requests for reimbursement every year of the grant and may submit no more than four requests per year. One large reimbursement at the end of your project will not be allowed.

Requests for reimbursement must be submitted on the Request for Reimbursement cover sheet provided by DATCP. To receive reimbursement, grantees must clearly outline costs being claimed, provide supporting documentation and proof of payment (e.g., copies of invoices with cleared checks, timesheets, etc.). Matching funds must be documented in the same manner as reimbursable expenses.

Ten percent of the grant award will be withheld as a final payment until DATCP receipt and approval of the completed final performance report and receipt of the final reimbursement request.

Pre-Award Costs

DATCP will not reimburse any costs incurred for work performed in the preparation of and production of an application or for any work performed prior to the contract's start date, including any costs incurred by any firm for work performed in the preparation and production of a proposal.

Reporting Requirements

Each approved grant recipient must submit semi-annual performance reports and one final performance report. DATCP will provide grant recipients with report templates. DATCP reserves the right to modify reporting requirements during the course of the project. Reports shall include the following.

Semi-Annual Performance Reports:

1. A brief summary of activities performed and targets or performance goals achieved during the reporting period for each project.
2. A discussion of any unexpected delays or impediments as well as favorable or unusual developments for each project.
3. A quantitative summary illustrating the increase in dairy farms where milk is taken from, projected monetary benefits, new and/or retained jobs, and new investment during the reporting period due to project work.

4. An outline of work to be performed during the next reporting period of each project.
5. An explanation of the grant funds expended to date for the project.

Final Performance Report:

1. A brief description of the original intent of the project, the perceived benefit of the project, and how the issue or problem was approached via the project.
2. A discussion of how the goals of the project were achieved.
3. A quantitative summary illustrating the increase in dairy farms where milk is taken from, projected monetary benefits, new and/or retained jobs, and new investment during the reporting period due to project work.
4. A discussion of results, conclusions, and lessons learned for each project.
5. Additional information available related to the project, such as publications or websites.
6. A contact person for each project, with telephone number and email address.

Recipients who do not submit reports on time, and/or submit incomplete reports, may be required to return all previously disbursed funds to DATCP and/or may be removed from future funding opportunities.

In addition, DATCP reserves the right to conduct follow-up surveys of funded projects in order to determine long-term impacts of the program.

Record Requirements

Grantees will be responsible for setting up and maintaining a project file that contains all records of correspondence with DATCP, receipts, invoices, and copies of all reports and documents associated with the project. Grantees shall retain all data and other records relating to the acquisition and performance of the grant award for a period of four years after the completion of the contract. All records shall be subject to inspection and audit by state personnel at reasonable times. Upon request, the grantee shall produce a legible copy of any or all such records.

Open Records

Applications submitted for funding and all related contracts and reports are subject to disclosure under Wisconsin's Public Records Law. If the grant applicant or recipient requests that any information in an application be deemed a trade secret, the document should be labeled "trade secret" and the requested status should be noted to DATCP when the document is submitted. DATCP will notify the grant recipient if a public records request is made for the information claimed to be trade secret. Such information may be kept confidential by DATCP only as authorized by law. See Wis. Stat. § 19.36(5).

Budget Adjustments

If a substantial change (10% or greater of a budget category) in the budget is needed during the project period, a written request must be made to DATCP to reallocate budget funds between budget categories. The total budget amount cannot be adjusted.

Vetting

Prior to any award, applicants will be vetted in conjunction with a standard risk assessment. Potential risk factors such as delinquent taxes, pending lawsuits, conflicts of interests, instances of unpaid vendors, and instances of uncompleted contracted activities may prevent awards. Vetting includes but is not limited to research via the United States General Service Administration, the State of Wisconsin Ineligible Vendor List, Wisconsin Circuit Court Access, DATCP, the Wisconsin Department of Financial Institutions, the Wisconsin Department of Revenue, and various other Wisconsin departments.

Other Considerations

All proposals submitted in response to this RFP become the property of DATCP. DATCP reserves a royalty-free, nonexclusive, and irrevocable license to reproduce, publish, otherwise use, and to authorize others to use materials produced under this grant agreement. DATCP also reserves the right to:

- Post funded proposals, summary reports and survey findings to the DATCP website.
- Reject any or all proposals received.
- Waive or modify minor irregularities in proposals received after prior notification and agreement of applicant.
- Clarify the scope of this program, within the RFP requirement and with appropriate notice to potential applicants, to best serve the interests of the State of Wisconsin.
- Amend program specifications after their release, with appropriate written notice to potential applicants.
- Require a good faith effort on part of the project sponsor to work with DATCP subsequent to project completion to develop or implement project results in Wisconsin.
- Partially fund applications.
- Use any or all ideas submitted unless ideas are covered by legal patent or proprietary rights.
- Withhold or recoup any payments when contract conditions are not met or if the recipient submits false or misleading information to the department.
- Modify reporting requirements during the course of the project.
- Share program report data and success stories with USDA and on DATCP websites and social media channels.
- Conduct a follow-up survey of funded projects in order to determine long-term impacts of the project.