



**AGRICULTURAL ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT  
GRANT PROGRAM GUIDELINES**

**Version 3.0**

# **ORANGE COUNTY AGRICULTURAL ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT GRANT PROGRAM**

This program is intended to provide assistance to Orange County farmers in developing new sources of agricultural income through the provision of cost-share grants. Individual grant limit is \$10,000. Farmer applicants must be able to demonstrate that their operation is a verifiable farm business (dependable market, track record of sales, sufficient infrastructure and experience, etc.).

## **Eligibility**

- The farm tract and farming operation on which the funds are to be used must be in Orange County in areas zoned appropriately for their use.
- Collaborative/Group grants must include at least 3 farmers and may include agricultural groups and agencies.
- Applicants and their businesses must not have any past due tax, fee, or fine applicable to Orange County.
- Applicant must be current with any existing Orange County Small Business Loan, CROP Loan or Emergency Small Business Loan Payments.
- Duplication of benefits prohibited. No individual business or affiliated owner(s) shall receive in excess of \$10,000 from Orange County's Small Business and Large Business Investment Grant Programs, the Agriculture Grant Program, and any other County grant awards over a two year period. Some individual programs may have more stringent restrictions in an effort to spread the funding across as many individual operations as possible. For the Agriculture Grant Program, as noted below in the guidelines, the \$10,000 maximum covers a 3-year period. This prohibition includes a situation in which the same owner(s) owns multiple businesses. In such a situation if one or more of the multiple businesses applied for a grant(s) the maximum available to any one or more of such businesses is \$10,000.
- Individuals who have taken legal action against the County in the past 12-months, or have an active legal case, and who applies for any available County grant program, are ineligible to apply for and receive grant funding through Orange County Government until the settlement or dismissal of such legal action.

## **Agricultural Grant Subcommittee**

- The Agricultural Economic Development Grant Subcommittee will be made up of five (5) voting members including:
- The Agricultural Representative from the Orange County Economic Development Advisory Board (OCEDAB),
- Two members of the Orange County Agricultural Preservation Board (OCAPB)

- who are farmers in Orange County (chosen by the OCAPB),
- One “at-large” farmer from Orange County,
  - One “at-large” food system or agriculture business practitioner from Orange County with relevant and beneficial experience,
  - Diversity among the Subcommittee is essential in ensuring equitable management of the Grant Program. Every effort will be made by the existing Subcommittee and support staff to seek qualified members from the categories above to encourage diverse participation with regard to race, ethnicity, national origin, gender, and age,
  - Designated members from the OCEDAB or OCAPB may serve up to 3 years with an option for renewal if the Subcommittee approves, as long as they are active members of the designated Boards.
  - “At-large” members are recruited by the Subcommittee for approval by the County Manager and may also serve up to 3 years with option for renewal,
  - Participation is expected and essential. If a member misses more than 2 meetings in a fiscal year (approximately 50%), the Subcommittee will have the option to remove that member.
  - A quorum is required for the Subcommittee to hold an official meeting and conduct business. A quorum is considered attendance by a simple majority of the active members. Attendance may be in-person, virtual, or telephonic.
  - The Subcommittee will meet quarterly (if funds are available) to review applications and also as required to conduct follow-up or general business.
  - Support will be provided by staff from the Orange County Economic Development Office and Orange County NC Cooperative Extension Service

## **Procedures**

1. Applicants will be referred to a common application link residing on both Orange County’s website and Orange County NC Cooperative Extension’s website, where they will complete and submit their application. Hard copies of the application will be provided upon request of the applicant if they cannot access the link. Quarterly application deadlines are; September 30<sup>th</sup>, December 31<sup>st</sup>, March 31<sup>st</sup>, and June 30<sup>th</sup>. The Subcommittee will meet soon after each quarterly deadline if applications have been submitted for that period.
2. County staff will provide completed applications to the Subcommittee for their review after the closing deadline and before the scheduled review meeting.
3. Quarterly review meetings will begin at the start of each funded fiscal year and will continue until funds are expended for that funding year. At its scheduled quarterly meetings, the Subcommittee will discuss the strengths and weaknesses of complete grant application(s) and decide whether or not to take action on the request, based on the information provided. All Applications must be complete, including a descriptive budget. Additional information may be provided if necessary to add clarity or better justification for how funds will be used.

4. The Subcommittee shall approve, deny, or defer and request additional information from the applicant based on the strengths and weakness of the application as reflected in the comprehensive scoring sheet (discussed and agreed-to by the Subcommittee). The Subcommittee may request an interview from an Applicant if greater detail is required to act on the application. Support staff will attend each meeting and document actions of the Subcommittee.
5. The applicant will be informed in writing by County staff of the Subcommittee's decision to deny, grant, grant with condition, or seek more information. If the Subcommittee denies a grant request, it shall provide a copy of the score sheet to the applicant.
6. Should the Subcommittee fully deny an application, the Subcommittee will not consider any applications from that applicant for at least six months. Should an applicant think that their application has been improperly denied, then the applicant may notify, in writing, the Subcommittee. The notice to the Subcommittee shall state why the applicant thinks the grant should be approved. The application shall then be given further consideration by the Subcommittee and its decision is final.
7. At its discretion, the Subcommittee may impose any additional terms to a grant request.
8. The Subcommittee may request alternative use for the funds from County management should an event or condition broadly impact agricultural operations in the County such that the intent, criteria, and schedule of funding be reconsidered to address that impact.
9. Applicants agree to utilize grant funds for their intended use unless having successfully presented a revised scope of work to the Subcommittee. Each venture receiving a grant must provide an expenditure report indicating how all funds were used and key milestones reached by the venture **within 180 days of the receipt of the grant**. This accounting will include a request for proof of expenditures made including copies of receipts and/or photos of the equipment or facility upgrades made. Any use of grant funds for non-intended uses must be justified by a revised scope of work pre-approved by the Subcommittee.
10. If an applicant fails to complete item #9 in a timely manner, the County has the right to require all grant funds back from the applicant, and may initiate legal proceedings against the applicant.
11. The Subcommittee shall provide annual reports to the Economic Development Department of the number of grants requested, approved and denied, and an analysis of the program's success metrics to date.
12. Documents, including, but not limited to, financial statements, business plans,

customer and supplier lists, description of inventory or assets, contractual obligations and existing liabilities, submitted during the application process shall be treated as confidential information.

### **Expenses**

Suitable expenses are those associated with the production and marketing of diversified farm enterprises, value-added, and agritourism endeavors. Funds are not intended for farmer or full-time employee salaries or normal farm operational costs (utilities, insurance, rent, etc.). Funds should be used as stated in the applicant's proposal unless any requested changes are pre-approved by the Subcommittee.

### **Funding Limits**

The maximum amount any one farm can receive within 3 years of initial funding is \$10,000. Multiple applications and subsequent awards of less than the \$10,000 limit may be made within the 3-year period by one farm entity but may not exceed \$10,000 in total awards for the 3-year period

### **Advisors/Mentors**

Although not required, advisors and mentors can bring valuable expertise and may increase the likelihood of success of your project. These may include County Agriculture Economic Development Coordinators, other farmers, marketing and production specialists, extension agents, crop consultants, non-profit organizations, business and other agricultural advisors.

### **GRANT APPLICATION GUIDELINES:**

1. Farm Name / DBA
2. Farm Address (must be located in Orange County, NC)
3. Years of Farming Experience
4. Phone number
5. E-mail address
6. Website or Social Media (if available)
7. Percent of Personal Income from Farming Enterprise
8. Amount of Grant Request (\$10,000 max)
9. Budget Summary – show how funds will be used
10. Owner(s) First & Last Name
11. Owners Address (if different than farm address)
12. Briefly describe your project/plan (scope, intent, goal, etc.) 400 word limit

(Questions 13-18 have 250 word limit)

13. Describe the effects of a successful project (market access, income, jobs, changes to current operations, etc.)
14. Summarize your current market (type, trends, etc.) and describe how a successful project will allow you to more effectively serve that market and/or new markets.
15. Describe anything new or innovative about your project and also what others may learn from your experience.
16. List the major steps/phases of your project and provide an estimated schedule for completion.
17. Describe how your knowledge, skills and abilities support the success of the project.
18. Describe any additional resources/assistance (financial, technical, contractual services, equipment, etc.) needed to complete your project and identify proposed sources for that assistance.

Grant applications must be completed and submitted online:

<https://orangecountyeconomicdevelopment.submittable.com/submit>

For Questions or Inquiries please contact:

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