

Beef & Beer, Pulse & Produce: How the State Can Assist with Grant Funds Towards your Ag Business Expansion



1

Montana's Offerings

"Flathead Cherries" as they are called in Montana, grow on the temperate shores of Flathead Lake.

Montana oilseed production is among the highest in the nation: #2 in flaxseed, safflower and canola.

2.6 million head of cattle roam Montana, which is more than double our state's population.

Montana is known for its world-class wheat and barley, ranking #3 and #2 nationally for each crop.

Pulse crops (peas, chickpeas, lentils) have become some of Montana's largest crops, and our state ranks #1 nationally in pulse production.

Hay production is estimated at 5.91 million tons ranking Montana #4 nationally.

MONTANA DEPARTMENT OF AGRICULTURE

2

MDA Grant and Loan Programs

- Growth Through Agriculture (@\$900,000)
 - Business Acceleration Program
 - Marketing Development Program (share \$330,000 in GTA funds)
- Specialty Crop Block Grant (@\$3,000,000)
- Local Food Purchasing Assistance (\$560,000 plus \$975,000 in Commodities funding-CCC)
- Student Loan Assistance Program for Ag (\$100,000 in 2024)
- Farm and Ranch Stress Assistance Grants to Orgs (@ \$60,000 remaining)

3

GTA Program Purpose

- The 1987 Montana Legislature passed the “Montana Growth Through Agriculture Act” which created the GTA grant and loan program.
- The purpose of the program is to help, “strengthen and diversify Montana’s agricultural industry... to keep pace with a transforming agricultural industry and to create new jobs and expand small business opportunities.”
- The program is administered by the 7-member Agriculture Development Council.
- The Department of Agriculture Grants Manager and Program Specialist assist the Council in administering the program.

4

Who Can Apply for GTA

- Private entities and organizations
- Business and industry
- Educational institutions
- Local governments
- Individuals-Sole Proprietor

5

Types of Awards for GTA

- Main Grant and Loan Program (GTA)
 - Grant – Up to \$50,000
 - Loan – Up to \$100,000
 - Available for concept paper submission in **late summer, 2023**
- Business Acceleration Program (BAP)
 - Up to \$20,000 over 2 years
 - ***OPEN*** for application submission
- Marketing Development Program (MDP)
 - Up to \$5,000 over 1 year
 - ***OPEN*** for application submission
- All GTA Programs:
 - Require a \$1 for \$1 cost share
 - Federal funding can be used as match; other state funding cannot
 - Applicants receive their awards on a reimbursement basis
 - Business name must be registered with the Montana Secretary of State

6

Criteria for Award

For all GTA Program Proposals:

- Adds value to Montana's agricultural products currently or potentially produced, and
- Shows prospects for commercial success given current personnel, experience and resources, or
- Shows prospects to create and/or retain jobs in Montana.

7

GTA Program- Funding Uses

- Funding is provided for:
 - Equipment purchases
 - Construction costs
 - Consultant services (design and engineering)
 - Advertising and promotion
 - Feasibility studies
- Funding is *not* provided for:
 - Salaries
 - Benefits
 - Overhead

8

GTA Program – Award Process

- Projects are selected through a 2-part application process.
- **Food and Agricultural Development Centers** are contacted for outside assistance.
 - <https://agr.mt.gov/Food-and-Ag-Development-Centers>
- The Council sets one application deadline per Fiscal Year (usually late fall).
- The Council meets about 6 weeks after the deadline to determine who is invited for the application round.
- Applicants are invited to present their proposals/Q&A to the Council approximately 4 weeks after.

9

GTA Program- Award Determination

- The Council decides whether the award will be:
 - A loan or a grant,
 - Funded, not funded, or partially funded,
 - If a loan, they set the terms of the loan
 - Interest rate
 - Deferral and repayment period

Any questions so far?

10

BAP and MDP Program- Funding Uses

- BAP funding is provided for:
 - Educational or training activities to attend an agriculture business related conference
 - Planning activities (PER, PAR, engineering study, marketing analysis, feasibility studies, etc.)

- MDP funding is provided for:
 - Marketing activities
 - Regional or National trade show assistance
 - Website development and advertising

11

BAP and MDP Program-How Projects are Selected

- **Food and Agricultural Development Centers should be contacted for outside assistance on applications.**

- By approval of the Council, Department of Agriculture staff review and make funding determinations on these proposals.

- Application intake is ongoing until funds are allocated.

- Applicants who already have a GTA app submitted should wait on that determination before moving forward on one of these smaller grants.

12

BAP and MDP Program Award Determination

- Staff review the applications, and rank them based on criteria states in the guidelines.
- Staff may ask for clarification if needed.
- Incomplete or ineligible applications cannot be considered.
- Applications are considered whether to fund, partially fund, or not to fund.

13

Specialty Crop Block Grant Program Purpose

- Through the Federally funded (USDA) program, Montana Department of Agriculture seeks to “enhance the marketability and competitiveness of Montana specialty crops”.
- Specialty crops are defined as fruits and vegetables, peas, lentils, horticulture, and nursery crops. A list of **eligible crops** is available online.
<https://www.ams.usda.gov/services/grants/scbgp/specialty-crop>

14

Who Can Apply for SCBG

- Grants are available to:
 - State and/or local organizations,
 - Government entities,
 - Producer associations,
 - Academia,
 - Community-based organizations, and
 - Other specialty crop stakeholders are eligible to apply either as single entities or in combined efforts (multi-state).
 - Business CAN apply...but project needs to be regionally based. Technique sharing, etc.

15

Types of Awards for SCBG

- Funding is for:
 - Grant – Minimum of \$10,000
 - *OPEN* for application, window closes **March 17, 2023**
 - No cost share or match required
 - Grantees receive their awards on a reimbursement basis
 - Organization name must be registered with the Montana Secretary of State
 - Business or eligible entity must be registered with SAM.gov and not debarred or suspended from using federal funds
 - Any program income resulting from the project must be used towards ongoing project development (conference earnings, etc.)

16

Criteria for Award

- **USDA** encourages:
 - Enhancing food safety;
 - Improving the capacity of all entities in the specialty crop distribution chain to comply with the requirements of the Food Safety Modernization Act (21 U.S.C. Chapter 27);
 - Investing in specialty crop research, including research to focus on conservation and environmental outcomes;
 - Developing new and improved seed varieties and specialty crops;
 - Pest and disease control;
 - Increasing child and adult nutrition knowledge and consumption of specialty crops;
 - Improving efficiency and reducing costs of distribution systems; and/or sustainability.

17

In Addition.....Montana's Priorities!

- Providing Farmer Education on Specialty Crops,
- Planning and Supporting Infrastructures that create or support Specialty Crops,
- Supporting Research in the Areas of Specialty Crops,
- Building Consumer and Buyer Relationships,
- Strengthening Producer Networks and Associations,
- Representing a Geographic Diversity of Projects across the State, with Rural Consideration.

18

Funding Categories for SCBG

- Funding is provided for:
 - Personnel and Fringe Benefits
 - Travel
 - Equipment
 - Supplies
 - Contractual
 - Other (conference fees, data collection, etc.)
- Funding is *not* provided for:
 - Business gain only

19

How to Start with SCBG

- Visit with your local Food and Ag Development Center, or Extension Agent
- Happy to share details on project requirements via conference call
- Two technical assistance meetings available:
 - **Feb 22, 2023** 1:00 PM Technical Assistance #1 Zoom Call
 - **March 8, 2023** 10:00 AM Technical Assistance #2 Zoom Call

20

Local Food Purchasing Assistance

- The distribution of local food from and to underserved constituencies,
- The organization of producer groups,
- Establishment of business relationships with underserved communities, and/or
- Identification of best business practices.
- Awards to be announced soon, BUT
- Get involved as a Producer! Sell your extra product to the food hub awardee.
- Current through **May 31, 2024**.
- Contact MDA Alicia Hamm ahamm@mt.gov OR Aly Townsend a.townsend@mt.gov for contacts to participate.
- Producers may self-identify if they are considered Socially Disadvantaged.

21

MDA Student Loan Assistance

- Developed to encourage Montana's college-educated youth to pursue a primary career in farming or ranching and reduce financial responsibilities.
- **Available Spring, 2024. An applicant must:**
 - be a Montana resident;
 - have obtained an associate or baccalaureate degree from a Montana based Postsecondary Institution; or
 - Attend an accredited community or tribal college located in the state of Montana <https://agr.mt.gov/Student-Loan-Assistance-Program> ; or
 - have an outstanding balance on an eligible student loan from obtaining such degree;
 - be the primary owner of a farm or ranch in Montana; participate in the day-to-day operations of the farm or ranch; and
 - agree to operate a farm or ranch in Montana for at least five years; and
 - non-default status on a student loan.

22

Beyond the Weather-Farm and Ranch Stress Assistance Network

- Serves Montanans with mental health care to break the stigma surrounding seeking counseling.
- Grants to orgs. and ext. agents throughout Montana for:
 - **Stress assistance** speakers for conferences;
 - **Mental health** podcasts or radio segments; and
 - **Trainings** to help increase knowledge and skills on recognizing mental health issues.
- Contact Marty Earnheart at mearnheart@mt.gov for more information. **Grants currently available.**
 - <https://agr.mt.gov/FRSAN>

23

RAISED IN THE WEST MAGAZINE
FALL 2022

NO MORE EMPTY SADDLES
Taking Action Against Suicide

FENTANYL POISONING:
An Attack on our Rural Communities

KATE'S AG
Farm to Fashion

BEYOND THE WEATHER
Stress Assistance for the Ag Community

MONTANA DEPARTMENT OF AGRICULTURE

FREE
Counseling Access for Montana Agriculture

1 Call or Click:
(406) 200-8471
frontier.care/beyondtheweather

2 Access:
Complete a quick intake form online, or with staff.

3 Connect:
Be partnered with a licensed professional for confidential free sessions.

More Information:
agr.mt.gov/FRSAN

beyond the weather

The Montana Department of Agriculture has partnered with Frontier Psychiatry to provide all Montanans involved in Ag with access to **free, confidential counseling access.**

This project has been funded by the USDA NRCA Farm and Ranch Stress Assistance Network (FRSAN), grant no. 2021-70035-18811037094, from the U.S. Department of Agriculture, National Institute of Food and Agriculture.

24

Thank You!

Aly Townsend, Grants Manager

a.townsend@mt.gov

406.444.5424
