



MARBIDCO

MARYLAND AGRICULTURAL AND RESOURCE-BASED
INDUSTRY DEVELOPMENT CORPORATION

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For Immediate Release
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MARBIDCO Announces Support of MDA's Resilient Food Systems Infrastructure (RFSI) Grant Program to Help Applicants Meet a Federal Matching Funds Requirement

ANNAPOLIS (February 1, 2024) – The Maryland Agricultural and Resource-Based Industry Development Corporation (MARBIDCO) has announced that it is working with the Maryland Department of Agriculture (MDA) to expand capacity for the aggregation, processing, storing, transporting, wholesaling, and distribution of Maryland farm-raised food products to institutional buyers, including specialty crops, dairy, grains for human consumption, aquaculture, and other food products, excluding meat and poultry.

MDA was recently awarded \$3.8 million from USDA to offer grants through the Resilient Food Systems Infrastructure program. MARBIDCO has allocated additional funding that can be used as part of the non-federal match requirement of the new MDA *RFSI Infrastructure Grant Program*.

MARBIDCO's matching grant program can serve historically underserved farmers, ranchers or other businesses that qualify under the Small Business Administration's categories of small, disadvantaged business, women-owned small business, or veteran-owned small business with a grant of up to 100% match, and up to a maximum of \$50,000. For all other eligible applicants, grants of up to 50% match – up to a maximum of \$50,000 – with this exception: If a unit of local government, rural regional council, or county school system is the applicant, the maximum award could be up to \$400,000.

MDA is offering two grants:

- Equipment-Only Grants range from \$10,000 up to \$100,000; This fixed price grant can only fund equipment and should fit the scope and goals of the RFSI program. No match is required for Equipment-Only Grants.
- Infrastructure Grants range from \$100,000 up to \$3 million. This grant can fund capital investments such as construction, equipment (e.g. delivery vehicles, frozen or refrigerated storage, value-added food processing equipment, or other equipment for middle-of-the food supply chain activities) and building renovations. Infrastructure Grants can also fund facility design or engineering, staff time, modernizing systems (e.g. tracking, storage, information technology, etc.), plan development (e.g. Hazard Analysis Critical Control Point plan), and market development. A match is required for Infrastructure Grants and starts at 50% of the total project cost. However, if the main applicant qualifies as underserved, the match requirement will be reduced to 25% of the total project cost.

Eligible applicants for MARBIDCO's matching grant include:

- An agricultural marketing group (an LLC), or legally organized farm cooperative including at least 4 [Certified Local Farm and Certified Chesapeake Invasive Species Providers](#).
- A wholesale distributor that is selling to at least one institution and aggregating from at least 4 Certified Local Farm and Certified Chesapeake Invasive Species Providers.
- Public entities (such as a county government, municipality, community college, university, county school system or rural regional council), either purchasing from or facilitating the aggregation from at least 4 Certified Local Farm and Certified Chesapeake Invasive Species Providers.

Eligible projects must meet all MDA RFSI application requirements. Projects that receive tentative approval from MARBIDCO will receive a match verification letter to be submitted with the MDA application. Only those applicants that are approved by USDA for the infrastructure grant and who demonstrate to MARBIDCO they will be selling products to wholesale or institutional buyers will receive funding.

The institutional buyer component could include a state or local government agency (including a correctional institution), school system, hospital, or chain of grocery stores. A wholesale buyer is a food distributor that has an established track record of selling food products to the institutions generally described above.

Some examples include:

- Public schools
- University system
- State agencies
- Hospitals
- Prisons
- Wholesale distributors that sell to an institutional buyer

The Maryland Department of Agriculture established the [Certified Local Farm and Fish Program](#) to encourage state agencies, including public four-year universities, to achieve an overall goal of purchasing 20% of their food from Certified Local Farm and Chesapeake Invasive Species Providers. To find a list of providers, visit [Certified Local Farm and Fish Program Directory](#).

MARBIDCO's RFSI matching grant application is due February 29, 2024. Send completed applications and all attachments to MARBIDCO RFSI Matching Grant Program, Sierra Criste, 1410 Forest Drive, Suite 21, Annapolis, MD 21403 or scriste@marbidco.org.

For information on MARBIDCO's matching grant, contact Sierra Criste, at scriste@marbidco.org or 410-267-6807, or visit MARBIDCO's website at: https://www.marbidco.org/pages/programs_grants/grant_programs_rfsimatch.htm

For more information about MDA's RFSI Program and the application process, please contact Karen Fedor at rfsi.mda@maryland.gov or 410-841-5773. MDA's RFSI application is due by 11:59 pm EST on Friday, March 15.

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MARBIDCO was established 17-years ago by the Maryland General Assembly to help enhance the sustainability and profitability of the State's agricultural and resource-based industries in order to help bolster rural economies, support locally produced food and fiber products, and preserve working farm and forest land. MARBIDCO is a nimble, quasi-governmental financial intermediary organization that has a mission to serve exclusively the commercial farming, forestry, and seafood industries of Maryland. Young and beginning farmers are a special

focus for MARBIDCO, as is farm operation diversification. In delivering its financing programs, MARBIDCO works cooperatively with commercial banks and farm credit associations, as well as a host of federal, State, regional, and local government agencies, and universities. Since 2007, MARBIDCO has approved some 1,300 financings totaling more than \$103.5 million for food and fiber business projects located in of all Maryland's counties – and in the process has leveraged more than \$219.3 million in commercial lender financing. For more information about MARBIDCO's programs, please visit: www.marbidco.org