



Rhode Island Department of Environmental Management

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GOV. MCKEE, LEGISLATIVE LEADERS, DEM ANNOUNCE \$700,000 PROGRAM FUNDING TO SUPPORT FOOD AND SEAFOOD BUSINESSES

PROVIDENCE, RI – Governor Dan McKee, leaders of the Rhode Island General Assembly, and the Department of Environmental Management (DEM) announce that \$700,000 in Local Agriculture and Seafood Act (LASA) programming funding is available to help new and existing food businesses grow and flourish. Enacted



in 2012 to “support and develop more robust and self-sustaining agricultural and seafood sectors,” [LASA](#) is an important catalyst in strengthening the local food system. Since its enactment 10 years ago, LASA has provided more than \$1.4 million through individual program grants up to \$20,000.

“The 2022 Local Agriculture and Seafood Act grants support projects that help with the entry, growth, and sustainability of small or starting green sector businesses, with a particular focus on supporting a diversity of foods and food producers,” said Governor McKee. “LASA is a pillar of our food strategy through which Rhode Island is investing to provide consistent access to safe, healthy, affordable food.”

“The Local Agriculture and Seafood Act has always been about being firmly committed to our constituents and sending the message that we are 100 percent behind local businesses,” said Sen. V. Susan Sosnowski, the Senate sponsor of LASA. “Local food gets from farm to table in fresher condition and means fewer trucks on the road, which means less air pollution. LASA encourages more people to eat more local food. This means better health for Rhode Islanders and our environment.”

“In the 10 years since LASA’s inception, a broad and diverse array of businesses and organizations have benefitted from grants including farmers’ markets, family farms, urban agricultural initiatives, oyster growers, cider makers, and dozens of others,” said Rep. Deborah Ruggiero, LASA’s House sponsor. “I am

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thrilled to see the level of support going into the next round of program grant funding and look forward to seeing how recipients use it to make Rhode Island's food system more resilient and sustainable."

"The fiscal 2023 budget was a product of true collaboration between the House, the Senate, and the Administration, and the House is particularly proud to have helped expand the program funding of the LASA grants to an historically high level," said House Finance Committee Chairman Marvin Abney. "From Newport to North Smithfield, seafood and agriculture are staples of Rhode Island and investing in them by investing in small producers will boost our whole food economy."

"Small businesses are the cornerstone of the Rhode Island economy, and agriculture and seafood businesses are the backbone of our food system. This significant investment in the LASA program championed by Senator Sosnowski will enhance the great work it does to support Ocean State food producers, strengthen our local food system, and help address food insecurity in our state," said Senate Finance Committee Chairman Ryan W. Pearson.

"DEM is always working to get more home-grown food on the table and by supporting local farmers and fishers in growing their businesses, the LASA grants help achieve this," said DEM Director Terry Gray. "Growing local and eating local, fresh, sustainable food minimizes transportation costs, reduces carbon emissions, and boosts the local economy while providing the freshest product possible to the consumer."

The 2022 programming funding priorities include:

- Supporting the entry, growth, and sustainability of small or beginning agriculture producers and fishers.
- Supporting agriculture producers and fishers that are Black, Indigenous, and People of Color.
- Supporting the development of new marketing, promotion, sales, and/or distribution channels.
- Supporting the development of new products, including value-added processing capacity.
- Fostering new cooperatives, partnerships, and/or collaborations among Rhode Island agriculture producers and fishers and supporting organizations.
- Fostering and building capacity for markets connecting local farms and fishers with Rhode Island's food insecure communities.
- Protecting the future availability of agricultural land for producers, including farm transition planning and implementation, and assisting with on farm food safety improvements, including the developing of Food Safety Modernization Act and hazard analysis critical control point standards.

During the 2021 grant program, DEM awarded \$250,000 of programming funding in LASA grants to 12 recipients. Eligible entities include for-profit farmers, fishers, producer groups, and non-profit organizations. Applicants must be based in Rhode Island and only small and/or beginning farmers, or producer groups of small or beginning farmers, are eligible to apply for capital grants. Aquaculture operators are considered farmers in the LASA program.

For more information on the LASA Grant program, please visit [DEM's website](#). Applications should be completed online via the State of Rhode Island Grant's Management System by Nov. 30, 2022 at 11:59 PM. Grant-related questions should be directed to Ananda Fraser, Chief Program Development in DEM's Division of Agriculture and Forest Environment at 401-222-2781 or via email to DEM.LASA@dem.ri.gov.

DEM continues to work across many fronts to benefit and strengthen Rhode Island's green economy and to assist local farmers and fishers in growing their businesses. There are more than 1,000 farms sprinkled across the state and Rhode Island is home to a thriving young farmer network. DEM continues to make investments in critical infrastructure as well as provide farm incubation space to new farmers through its Urban Edge Farm and Snake Den Farm properties. The state's food scene is often cited as an area of economic strength ripe for innovation and growth. Already, the local food industry supports 60,000 jobs, and the state's green industries account for more than 15,000 jobs and contribute \$2.5 billion to the economy annually.

For more information on DEM programs and initiatives, visit www.dem.ri.gov. Follow [DEM on Facebook](#), Twitter (@RhodeIslandDEM), or Instagram (@rhodeisland.dem) for timely updates.

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