



Business Builder Awards

About

The USDA Regional Food Business Centers support a more resilient, diverse, and competitive food system by providing localized assistance to help food and farm businesses access local and regional supply chains. In addition to providing technical assistance and coordination efforts across the region, each Center administers a Business Builder award program to increase the capacity of eligible small and mid-sized food and farm businesses through direct investment. Additional Business Builder award program information can be found on the [RFBC Business Builder award program page](#).

What is the Business Builder Award Program?

Business Builder awards provide direct investment of up to \$100,000 to eligible small and mid-sized farms and food businesses. Business Builder awards are direct investments in individual farm and food businesses to support their market goals and maximize their participation in the regional food system. The Business Builder award program aims to:

- 1. Increase Revenue:** Increase food and farm business revenue and improve financial acumen and overall business viability;
- 2. Create Markets:** Create more, new, and better markets and increase market awareness and access;
- 3. Expand Local Sourcing:** Increase the number of local producers that distributors, retailers and foodservice buyers source from, either directly or through intermediaries; and
- 4. Focus on Regional Need:** Support region-specific priorities identified by the Center.

What are the priorities of the Business Builder Award Program?

Each Center's Business Builder award program is uniquely tailored to the opportunities and needs of the region. Centers work with program partners to develop goals and priorities to strategically fund projects across their region.

What types of farms and food businesses are eligible for Business Builder awards?

Business Builder awards are for small and mid-sized food and farm businesses, including producers, processors, aggregators, distributors, and other businesses within the food supply chain. The program supports all types of products and market channels including (but not limited to) specialty crops, livestock, poultry, dairy, grains, fish, agritourism activities, non-food revenue streams from by-products or co-products such as leathers, ornamentals, etc.).

What is the size and scope of the awards?

The maximum amount of funding that any single farm, food business, or other eligible entity can receive through the Business Builder award program is \$100,000 over the course of the current Regional Food Business Center program cycle. Award sizes are determined by each Center and range between \$3,000 to \$100,000. Contact your local Center to determine the award size for the program in your region. Contact information for each Center can be found on the RFBC Awarded Center page.



When will Business Builder awards be announced?

All Centers will offer several rounds of Business Builder awards. While it varies significantly by region, the first Business Builder awards were announced in June 2024 and additional funding opportunities will continue to be announced throughout the duration of the Regional Food Business Center program. For the most up to date award timelines, eligibility information, and Center priorities, please visit the [RFBC Business Builder award program page](#).

What types of projects and activities can be funded through Business Builder awards?

Awarded projects must be for post-harvest business, market, and supply chain development activities for eligible food and farm businesses. Projects may support staff time, business planning activities, software implementation, value chain coordination, and the purchase of special purpose equipment (such as food safety, processing and packaging equipment).

What types of business expenses or activities are not allowable through Business Builder awards?

Farming, gardening, and other production-related costs (including salaries, equipment or supplies associated with production activities) cannot be paid for through Business Builder awards. Purchasing land, constructing new buildings, and purchasing equipment that does not directly support the goals of the program is also not allowable.

How can I apply to the Business Builder award program?

Each Business Builder award program is unique and has its own application process, award timeline, and eligibility and program requirements. Some programs require applicants to complete coursework, develop business plans, participate in a training program or receive technical assistance from the Center or its partners to be eligible to apply. Contact your local Center for specific program requirements.

How can I learn more about the Regional Food Business Center Business Builder awards in my region?

Interested farms and businesses should contact their Regional Food Business Center directly and visit the [RFBC Business Builder award program page](#). Contact information for each Center can be found on the [RFBC Awarded Center page](#) of the USDA's Regional Food Business Center webpage.

