

Governor’s Agriculture and Forestry Industries Development Fund (AFID) Blue Catfish Processing, Flash Freezing, and Infrastructure Grant Program

Overview

Chapters 133 and 134 of the 2023 Acts of Assembly authorize the Governor to award grants from the Governor’s Agriculture and Forestry Industries Development Fund (Va. Code § 3.2-303 et seq.) (Fund) for the Blue Catfish Processing, Flash Freezing, and Infrastructure Grant Program to encourage efforts by political subdivisions to support the processing, flash freezing, and infrastructure of invasive blue catfish species. Any funds awarded by the Governor shall be awarded as reimbursable grants of no more than \$250,000 per grant to political subdivisions to support blue catfish processing, flash freezing, and infrastructure projects.

Chapters 133 and 134 also require the Secretary of Agriculture and Forestry to develop guidelines for the Blue Catfish Processing, Flash Freezing, and Infrastructure Grant Program on behalf of the Governor. Such guidelines shall (i) require the grants be awarded on a competitive basis, (ii) state the criteria the Governor will use in evaluating any grant application, and (iii) favor projects that create processing, flash freezing, and infrastructure capacity in proximity to small-scale blue catfish watermen.

Project Types

Projects receiving funding through the Blue Catfish Processing, Flash Freezing, and Infrastructure Grant Program must be infrastructure development projects that directly support local food production, enhance environmental sustainability, and demonstrate a broad community benefit. Grant funds should be used primarily for capital expenditures.

Priority Project Types

Consideration will be given to the following project types:

- Projects that create processing, flash freezing, and infrastructure capacity in proximity to small-scale blue catfish watermen.
- Processing facilities that are primarily locally owned, including packaging, freezing, and labeling facilities that are used for processing blue catfish.
- Projects that involve or incorporate existing seafood processors and businesses.
- Projects located in the localities of the Rural Coastal Virginia Community Enhancement Authority (§ 15.2-7600) or in Planning District 23.
- Projects providing a local match, if any.

Additional consideration will be given to projects that benefit watermen.

Eligibility

Applications must be made by a political subdivision of the Commonwealth, typically counties or cities but also towns, industrial and economic development authorities, or planning district commissions.

Applications may be made on behalf of more than one locality, provided that a single political subdivision serves as the lead applicant and grant administrator.

Applicants are only eligible for one grant award per grant round. Applicants must be in good standing

regarding any other awards from the Fund.

Grant Administration

The Secretary of Agriculture and Forestry shall make funding recommendations to the Governor and will determine how and when grant applications are reviewed and awards made.

Program Funding Round

The application period for this grant funding extends from Oct. 20 to Nov. 20 with award announcements made no later than December 31, 2023.

Project Evaluation and Award Criteria

Awards will be made on a competitive basis based on the strength of a candidate's application. Applicants must follow the AFID Infrastructure Program Application format. Stronger applications will clearly explain:

- the project purpose,
- the specific issue(s) that the project will address,
- the local or regional benefits of the project,
- the specific goals or objectives of the project,
- the particular deliverables of the project,
- Projects located in the localities of the Rural Coastal Virginia Community Enhancement Authority (§ 15.2-7600) or in Planning District 23,
- how grant funds and local match will be used, if applicable.

In addition to the quality and completeness of an application, the following criteria will also be used when making award decisions:

- Expected positive economic impact of the project on affected localities,
- Demonstration of the likelihood of success in achieving the promised deliverables,
- Demonstration of support from the watermen and seafood communities,
- Demonstration of environmentally sustainable practices.

Grant Awards and Reporting Requirements

A Blue Catfish Processing, Flash Freezing, and Infrastructure Grant Program award is a reimbursable grant. Once the funds are awarded, each grantee will receive a Memorandum of Agreement outlining the grant period and reporting requirements. Grant awardees have two years from the award announcement date to complete their deliverables and may request an extension from the Secretary of Agriculture and Forestry for up to one additional year.

Grantees are required to complete an interim grant report one year into the grant period. Reimbursements may be requested periodically throughout the grant period; up to 75 percent of the grant funds may be allocated prior to the end of the grant period. Upon completion of the grant period, grantees are required to submit a final grant report, including any grant deliverables, along with a budget close-out form including all receipts, invoices, and backup documentation. The final reimbursement payment will be made upon verification of the final grant documents.

Application Submission

Email the completed application by the deadline to:

Rachel Meyers
Office of Agriculture and Forestry Development
rachel.meyers@vdacs.virginia.gov

Or submit by mail to:
Rachel Meyers
Office of Agriculture and Forestry Development
Virginia Department of Agriculture & Consumer Services
102 Governor Street
Richmond, VA 23219