

Frequently Asked Questions (FAQ)

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Virginia Department of Agriculture and Consumer Services
Virginia Food Access Investment Fund
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Is there an email distribution list for new grant opportunities?

Okay, so yes and no. I started creating one because and I'm going to be honest with you, I've just been so overwhelmed. I'm like managing 6 grants. So, I am creating one as I go. I do get a lot of emails on people who got my information asking so I do keep that on a list so when it does happen I just kinda just shot you guys one a couple of weeks ago regarding a grant.

Just to ask maybe a couple of questions here, because we have many of our grantees on, some that you're familiar with. But if you can maybe share your screen so, that they can actually then locate these grants.

Let me pull it up because I will tell you if you go to VDACS's website and that's the thing and I don't know if it's the same for you guys too, but a lot of state department websites if you're trying to find something is like trying to find a needle and a haystack so I'm going to give you 2 different ways.

Let's go start at the beginning. So this is the website, the main website <https://www.vdacs.virginia.gov/>. Nine times out of ten times people want to type in "Grants", which you can do that. That's fine. But the thing about this, it's going to pull up all the grants we have. There might be some that are old from like 2 or 3 years ago, some that are closed because unfortunately we don't do a good job updating our website. But for the most part this is a good place to start.

Over here (at the center of the home page) you have a menu. (Clicking on) food safety (and then) food distribution is a good place to start, or you can just type in food distribution. Now, we have a lot of information here on our website. Because not only do I have grants, we have other grants within our department, like I said, we have like our TFAP and CSFP. But, most of the stuff relating to grants is going to be at the top.

So, I will say 2 places to start is food distribution that I'm aware of and agriculture and forestry development they have grants as well too. And I'll put that link in the chat for you guys.

<https://www.vdacs.virginia.gov/food-food-distribution.shtml>

Now, I know you mentioned there are a number of grants. Some of them have closed some of them possibly will reopen. When is your next grant reopening?

We are in a planning stages of that right now. I'm going to be honest with you. I have 6 grants. Right now, so it's alphabet soup up in here, but I'm getting to a point where I'm slowing down. I just need to get my

RFSI grant out and then. There'll be conversation as to when we'll start our next one. But I know the one that everyone is really looking for is our VFAIF. The Virginia Food Access Investment Fund Grants. That is also on the grants page. If you want to, the guidelines are there, they haven't changed.

Once you post a grant on the website how much lead time do you typically provide before the application is due?

Yeah, we usually give about 30 days. If it's a situation where you feel like you may need to one or 2 days more because you need to get some more information; we can do that too. We're not really strict about that. We try to give everybody a chance to get their information in.

I have a quick question. So are all of these grants, reimbursable. They're all with LFPA and Farm to Table all of that so my next question is: What is...and I know it is a slow process but just as people are new people are applying what is that turnaround time on getting that reimbursement back?

Typically, it could take 30 days from a time I received a proper invoice. A proper invoice means that everything is there, all of the supporting documentation is there. If I get a proper invoice submitted on the first, I don't like to keep stuff on my desk. I'll try to have it to the budget on the first or the second. If not, I have to come back to you on the third and say, hey, I need something to support this invoice, for Farmer John. If you don't send it back to me until the fifth that clock starts over again on fifth. So, it's good to have all of your stuff together. If you have direct deposit, that's a good process to have too.

For your main grant, do you have to be a retailer where people purchase food? What if you are purchasing food to and giving it away to those in need?

So, what you're referring to is the VFAIF grant. That's just particularly for that grant. We do have grants that if you will just want to purchase food to give away for people they need. That would be the VAFAP (Virginia Agriculture Assistance Program) or the Virginia Farm to Virginia Families Food Box program or any other grants that are available. But that specific one, the VFAIF is for retail outlets. They have to have that retail component.

We have a program where we partner at our farmers market, where the visitors get to take a lap around our facility. And we give them a token normally it's \$5 per lap towards fruits and vegetables. What we're looking for is additional funding to support that piece of the program. Would your grants support our take-a-lap program for fresh fruits and vegetables and an exercise component?

Would you be purchasing food from underserved farmers? Are you in a distressed area?

Reply: We are in the distressed area, and we do support, local, Minority farmers which come to our market. We do offer SNAP

Yeah, that would be fine. Sounds like you would, qualify for something. If you have a project and you would like for us to come to your facility. To see what you're looking to do and just kind of talk to us because we like to get out, we kind of do a little vetting process. When we look at your application, we can speak to, hey, we've seen this in action, we know the work that they do, we know where they're distributed, they meet the guidelines. A lot of times we can come out to your organizations to talk, and you can discuss one on one with us what you're looking to do.

Would you be able to use this grant for families of our After-school Mentoring and Tutoring program?

Yeah, if you're a 501 (C)(3), sure, for some of them. Yeah, because actually Lulu's participates in our LFPA program called the Local Food Purchase Assistance Cooperative Agreement. Basically, Lulu's is an organization that works with 20 different producers here and around the Richmond area. They also give away food in the city of Richmond, City of Richmond schools After school. cause it can't go on the plate, so they provide the 1st produce to some of the schools. Around the city. Some of the distributions, I think the summer they had broad rock, Black Rock Elementary, Henry Marshall, River City High School and Huguenot. So sure, definitely.

We have about 40 different locations of churches where we tutor the kids out of school, but we have a STEM component where we're putting in. We should have at the end of this school year or the beginning of the school year, 28 locations. We're putting hydroponic gardens into the sites and kids are growing their own food. I didn't think it would catch on that quick but I'm because I'm thinking you know, gardens here, but the kids just loved it. They were eaten the vegetables and fruit grown there and talking about them and kind of monitoring their growth that kind of thing and merging the PH level. So, we are definitely excited about that program. I guess. I'm always trying to look for those programs that can kind of incorporate good, healthy food. We are trying to implement some things where kids are getting a little more healthy, more athletic and more active.

So, you already told me pretty much your project plan. You gave me your measurable outcomes. So, you've already really started your process. Awesome, you know if you're doing after school programs, food distributions, as long as it's getting out. And you know, if you can write a really good grant proposal, it doesn't have to be 40 pages, it just needs to tell the story. So yeah, I'll be excited to share some great information with you guys as soon as it comes out that we have.

