**2024 Independent Processor Assistance Program Grants**

Nebraska is a leader in meat production and processing which is a vital part of our nation’s food supply. TheNebraska Department of Agriculture (NDA) will award these Independent Processor Assistance Program Grants using funds from Nebraska’s American Rescue Plan Act (ARPA).

**Frequently Asked Questions**

**1. Who is eligible to apply?**

The Independent Processor Assistance Program Grants are available to newly operating and existing processors to facilitate improvements, enhancements, or expansions that will increase harvest capacity and/or product throughput. Eligible processors are those that operate as either a USDA-FSIS facility or a federally regulated custom-exempt slaughter and processing facility, while also remaining in compliance with all applicable federal regulations. New facilities must show capacity to seek licensure as either a USDA-FSIS facility or as a federally regulated custom-exempt facility. To be eligible, existing operations must be domiciled in the State of Nebraska and be registered in good standing with the Secretary of State to conduct business in Nebraska. Additionally, existing sales revenue must be less than $2.5 million and employment must be fewer than 25 employees.

**2. When can I apply?**

The application period for the Independent Processor Assistance Program Grants will open on Tuesday, January 16, 2024. Applications are due by Friday, February 16, 2024, at 11:59 p.m.

**3. How do I apply?**

An online platform called AmpliFund, is launched for the Independent Processor Assistance Program Grants. Applicants interested in applying must do so by clicking (link).

**4. What are the expense eligibility standards?**

Applicants may receive grant funds for expenses incurred after August 28, 2021, and obligated by June 1, 2025. This grant funding must only be used for eligible expenses, and funds must be expended by the end of 2026.

**5. What expenses are eligible?**

Eligible project expenses include, (but are not limited to):

1. Capital improvements to expand capacity, including expansion and modifications to existing buildings or construction of new buildings at existing facilities;
2. Upgrades to utilities, including water, electric, heat, refrigeration, freezing, and waste facilities;
3. Livestock intake and storage equipment;
4. Processing and manufacturing equipment, including cutting equipment, mixers, grinders, sausage stuffers, smokers, curing equipment, pipes, motors, pumps, and valves;
5. Packaging and handling equipment, including sealing, bagging, boxing, labeling, conveying, and product-moving equipment;
6. Warehouse equipment, including storage and curing racks;
7. Waste treatment and management equipment, including tanks, blowers, separators, dryers, digesters, and equipment that uses waste to produce energy, fuel, or industrial products;
8. Technology that allows increased capacity or business resilience, including software and hardware related to business functions, logistics, inventory management, plant production controls, temperature monitoring controls, and web site design that enables e-commerce;
9. Rental of buildings, facilities, or equipment necessary to expand capacity, including mobile slaughter units and mobile refrigeration units used exclusively for meat or poultry processing;
10. Costs associated with increased inspections or becoming inspected, including overtime inspection services by USDA - FSIS and hazard analysis and critical control point consultation services; and
11. Educational and workforce training provided either by the facility or by an institution of higher education.

**6. Are there any expenses that are not eligible?**

The purpose of the Independent Processor Assistance Program is to address supply chain disruptions caused by the public health emergency and increase and improve livestock slaughter and meat processing capacity. It is crucial that potential projects meet these expectations to expand market access and/or facilitate workforce development.

**7. How will funding be distributed?**

There is $5.1 million funding remaining for the Independent Processor Assistance Program Grants. Awards may be up to $100,000 based on eligibility and availability of funds; however, recipients may or may not receive the entirety of funds requested. Previous recipients of grant funding will be eligible to apply in the second round, but preference will be given to applications not previously awarded funding.

**8. How will I know if my application is approved or denied?**

The application period closes on February 16, 2024, at 11:59 p.m. Notifications will be provided by email to all applicants after March 1, 2024.

**9. Is this program only available to slaughter and meat processor facilities in Nebraska?**

Yes, to successfully apply for the Independent Processor Assistance Program Grants, you must be located in Nebraska, operate or plan to operate a USDA-FSIS or federally regulated custom-exempt facility, and be engaged in livestock harvest and further processing.

**10. I am a startup slaughter and meat processor. Can I still apply?**

Yes, the startup slaughter and meat processor must be currently processing meat to be eligible.

**11. I’ve already started working on a project to improve, enhance or expand my meat processing facility to increase product throughput. Can I still apply?**

Only project expenses incurred after August 28, 2021, and obligated by June 1, 2025, are eligible to apply and receive grant funding.

**12. How will you determine who gets funding for the Independent Processor Assistance Program Grants?**

The Independent Processor Assistance Program is a competitive grant program aimed at providing industry-wide benefits. Preference may be given to proposals increasing harvest capacity, advancing technological systems, and providing opportunity for workforce development. For more information on evaluation criteria, refer to the section on **“What expenses are eligible?”**.

**13. Who can I contact with any further questions?**

If you have any further questions, you may contact:

Megan Pernicek-Federal Aid Administrator II

megan.pernicek@nebraska.gov

402-471-6823

**14. If an Applicant had a project that was over the $80,000 award in round 1 would the remainder of the project be eligible for round 2?**

Yes, the funding can be used to reimburse the remainder of the original project. If the funding overlaps or the recipient received funds from another grant, the applicant may be deemed ineligible.