



CENTER FOR  
**Dairy**EXCELLENCE

## For Immediate Release

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### **GRANTS AVAILABLE TO HELP DAIRY PRODUCERS WITH TRANSITION PLANNING, TRANSFORMATION PROJECTS, AND CONSULTING WORK**

*Dairy Decisions Consultants (DDC) and Transition/Transformation Team Grants Are Available*

**Harrisburg, Pa.** – Dairy producers who are looking to work one-on-one with professional consultants to make a major business transformation, begin transition planning, or analyze another area of their dairy operation should consider applying for the Dairy Decisions Consultants (DDC) Grant Program and the Transition/Transformation Team Grant Program through the Center for Dairy Excellence. Leveraging funds provided through the Commonwealth of Pennsylvania and PA Dairymen’s Association, the Center has limited grants available on a first-come, first-served basis through June of 2025.

“Getting partners and consultants around the table, and realizing that you don’t have to make decisions alone, is huge for many PA dairy farm families. By working with respected consultants who have direct experience in different sectors of the dairy industry, these grants can help dairy producers navigate everything from permitting and regulations to communication between family members and the legal process for setting up an LLC,” said Melissa Anderson, Programs and Operations Manager at the Center for Dairy Excellence. “We want as many dairy producers as possible to utilize these funds, have a sounding board, get fresh perspective, and gain the confidence to make decisions that drive their dairy businesses forward.”

The Dairy Decisions Consultant (DDC) Grants pair dairy farm families with professional consultants who offer one-on-one support to make strategic business decisions. The Center for Dairy Excellence has a list of more than 22 Dairy Decisions Consultants with extensive expertise in different business sectors. Farms can receive up to \$4,500 to work with a consultant who can help enhance business performance, reach financial benchmarks, and explore new opportunities.

Consultants can work with farms in one of seven strategic areas:

- Employee Management & Communication
- Business Planning & Structure
- Product Marketing & Labeling
- Direct Marketing
- Animal Welfare
- Financial Management
- Pre-Farm Transition

“When my wife and I made the decision that we were both going to be on the farm full time, we knew the finances had to work. The DDC grant helped us get a new accounting program set up so we could get reports that are functional without us spending a lot of time on them. Our consultants also sat down with us and told us what was and wasn’t working. That’s the kind of accountability you need. We’re driven to do better because of it,” shared Zach Kreger of Kreger Farms.

If a farm already has a consultant in mind they would like to work with, that person can be named within the application for approval by the Center. Farms are eligible to receive the DDC grant once every three years. Farms that have 35 or more lactating cows or dairy heifer raising operations with more than 100 dairy heifers are eligible to apply.

“We have two separate operations, one milking 300 and one milking 800. We wanted to work with a consultant to understand areas for improvement as both operations were purchased in the last three years. Having the resources from the consultant to be in a benchmarking program allows us to compare several key data points,” said Cory Mellott of Molly Pitcher Milk LLC. “It’s easy to see most of the problems that come up on a daily basis. It’s much harder to go through all the books to decide what is cost-effective, efficient, and productive. It’s good to work with an experienced consultant for the knowledge and experience they have.”

The Transition and Transformation Team Grants allow dairy producers to establish on-farm advisory teams with industry experts and trusted advisors. The teams can help dairy farm families create succession plans for transitioning the business between generations or feasibility studies to determine how to proceed with a transformation project.

The Dairy Transition Team grants focus on transition in the farm business such as succession, change in business structure, or partnership. Farms can apply to receive up to \$3,500 in funding, which could cover the cost of paid team members, discovery-related costs and lawyer expenses.

“When you work with each other day in and day out, sometimes you don’t always hear things like someone else does. Our consultant just had a different perspective on listening to what we all had to say and then presenting it back to us. It was helpful. He encouraged us to take [the farm transition] slow and gave us real insight on how to keep things moving forward and some thoughts on which direction to go,” said Betsy Yoder of Heron Run Farms.

The Dairy Transformation Team grant focuses on modernizing facilities and pursuing a business transformation or additional enterprise within the dairy operation. The Transformation Team allows producers considering a major business transformation to apply to receive up to \$3,500 to establish a team to help plan and work through that transformation. Manure storage facility improvements do not qualify as eligible Transformation Team projects.

“We definitely found out where our edge is. I would have hated to start this robotics project and then realized all of a sudden we needed to cut out [certain aspects]. Thanks to the grant, we knew how far we could go and how many extra things we could add to this barn,” shared Donny Bartch of Merrimart Farms. “Especially for a farm our size, it was invaluable just how far the grant money went and the information we got out of it. It helped jumpstart everything. It gave me the confidence I needed to move forward with a project like this. It went from a pipe dream to a reality.”

On-farm teams consist of the farm's most trusted advisors, with a facilitator designated to coordinate meetings and workflow. The Center partners with the Penn State Extension Dairy Team, University of Pennsylvania, and private industry to provide resources and expertise to farms involved in the program.

Limited grants are available for this fiscal year, which ends in June of 2025. Funds are available on a first-come, first-served basis. Farms must complete an application and submit the required \$100 application fee to participate in each program. Visit [www.centerfordairyexcellence.org/grants](http://www.centerfordairyexcellence.org/grants) to learn more and apply online.

Contact Melissa Anderson at 717-788-0296 or [manderson@centerfordairyexcellence.org](mailto:manderson@centerfordairyexcellence.org) with questions about which grant might be the best fit for your operation.

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The Center for Dairy Excellence is a non-profit organization initiated by the Pennsylvania Department of Agriculture in 2004. Bringing together people from more than 40 different dairy organizations in Pennsylvania, the Center's mission is to enhance the profitability of the dairy industry by empowering people, creating partnerships, and increasing the availability and use of resources. Learn more at [centerfordairyexcellence.org](http://centerfordairyexcellence.org).

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