



CENTER FOR
DairyEXCELLENCE

For Immediate Release

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December 15, 2025

GRANT FUNDING AVAILABLE TO HELP PA DAIRY FARMS WORK WITH EXPERIENCED CONSULTANTS AND FORM ADVISORY TEAMS

The Dairy Decisions Consultants (DDC) and Transition/Transformation Team Grants Are Now Open

Harrisburg, Pa. – The Center for Dairy Excellence is now accepting applications for both the Dairy Decisions Consultants (DDC) Grant Program and the Transition/Transformation Team Grant Program for the 2025-26 year. Dairy producers can utilize the grants to work one-on-one with professional consultants in one of seven strategic areas of business or form an advisory team to help create a transition plan or major business transformation plan. Leveraging funds provided through the Commonwealth of Pennsylvania and PA Dairymen’s Association, the grant program opened in December of 2025. Limited grants are available on a first-come, first-served basis.

“By working with respected consultants who have firsthand experience in different sectors of the dairy industry, dairy producers don’t have to make decisions alone. They have a sounding board and an outside perspective to help them make significant, strategically-sound business decisions that shape the future of their dairy farms,” said Melissa Anderson, Programs and Operations Manager at the Center for Dairy Excellence. “These teams and consultants can help farms navigate everything from permitting and regulations to communication between family members and the legal process for setting up an LLC.”

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 21 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

“Through the DDC Grant, [my consultant] did a full-blown analysis of my cash flow and also my debt-to-asset ratio. Then, he gave me options of what I could do. We wanted to get off the farm. I had a knee that was giving me problems, so I needed to do something. And the price of cows wasn’t good. We didn’t know what to do,” shared Jay Weaver of Weaverline Holsteins in Lebanon County, Pa. “My consultant created the cash flow set-up for the option of getting a tenant. He put everything in black-and-white. It has been three years now that our tenant has been in. He’s doing a real good job with the cows and has good production. [The partnership] has exceeded our expectations.”

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.

“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 in Tioga County, Pa.

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.

“By having an outside consultant through the Transition Team Grant, you have somebody who has gone through it. When my dad and uncle went through a transition before me, there was a lot of tension. There was a lot my dad and uncle learned from that,” shared Chad Hoover of Thousand Hill Dairy in Cambria County, Pa. “We all want the farm to be profitable, but at the same time, we all have our own ideas on how we want to do it. It was nice to have another perspective from a third party.”

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.

“The Transformation Team Grant from the Center helped us put a team of people together to talk about our options. We all had the same goal in mind but brought different perspectives to the table. There are so many different ways you can make ice cream. It made me think of things in a different way and consider things I hadn’t before – instead of me just diving into this with only a dream and ambition,” shared Kacie Hershey of Ar-Joy Farms in Chester County, Pa.

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 the 2025-26 year, and 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 to learn more and apply online. Contact Melissa Anderson at 717-788-0296 or 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.

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