



CENTER FOR
DairyEXCELLENCE

For Immediate Release

Media Contact: Emily Barge, 717-346-0849; ebarge@centerfordairyexcellence.org

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GRANT OPPORTUNITIES TO OPEN SEPT. 15 FOR DAIRY PRODUCERS AND VALUE-ADDED DAIRY BUSINESSES

The Grants Help Support Improvement Projects and Value-Added Consulting

Harrisburg, Pa. – The Center for Dairy Excellence will open two competitive grant programs on September 15, 2023 for Pennsylvania dairy producers and dairy value-added operations who are looking to advance their businesses. Leveraging funds provided through the Commonwealth of Pennsylvania and the Northeast Dairy Business Innovation Center, the programs include Dairy Excellence Grants and Marketing, Branding and Labeling Consultant Grants. Both programs have limited windows to apply.

“Whether you want to build a new calving barn, improve cow comfort with a new bedding system, or pursue a new opportunity in the value-added space, these grant opportunities can help put your goals into action,” said Melissa Anderson, Programs and Operations Manager at the Center for Dairy Excellence. “After implementing on-farm improvement projects, many of our grant recipients notice moderate to major improvements in both milk production per cow and overall profitability of their dairy operation.”

The **Dairy Excellence Grant program** is ideal for Pennsylvania dairy producers who want to improve cow comfort, milk production per cow, or overall efficiency on their dairy farm. This is a competitive grant program that offers up to a 50 percent, or up to a maximum matching level of \$5,000, to dairy farms approved into the program. Grant applications will only be accepted from September 15 to October 16, 2023, with selections made and winning applicants notified by October 25.

“We were upgrading from calf hutches for multiple reasons. We went from housing for 9 to housing for 12. We’re able to do group housing in them easier. It has been about two years, and we have seen stronger, healthier heifers just because of the updated facilities that better suit our needs,” said Lori Kauffman of Kauffman Dairy Farm, a previous grant recipient. “Any chance to better your farm and your productivity makes a big difference in this journey of dairy farming. [The grant] might not cover the entire project, but for us, it made the difference between us having enough to swing it or put it off another year.”

Improvement projects can include anything related to improving milk production per cow and/or enhancing overall farm profitability and efficiency. Examples of applicable projects include fans, sprinklers or misters in free stall or tie stall barns; curtains or other ventilation improvements; mattresses or construction to move to deep bedded sand stalls; variable speed pulsation; cow brush or foot bath installation; and enhanced feed systems for approved projects.

The **Marketing, Branding and Labeling Consultant Grant program** is designed for value-added dairy businesses looking to build their brand, develop effective labels, create marketing plans, and identify appropriate strategies to increase product sales and consumer access. If accepted into the program, grant recipients will have access to a consultant who has experience in the dairy value-added space. Dairy value-added businesses in Pennsylvania, Maryland, Delaware, and New Jersey are eligible to apply.

Up to 11 grants will be awarded, and if all 11 grants are utilized, each grant will be for \$5,000. Recipients will receive up to \$3,750 to work with a consultant and up to \$1,250 for direct implementation of the consultant's recommendations. Grant applications will only be accepted from September 15 through October 31, 2023.

"When I was thinking about buying this business and figuring out if it was even an option for me, a few people recommended I talk to certain consultants. They were great, but I didn't have that kind of money. It was a huge relief when I learned about this grant and the opportunity for Maryland farmers," said Ariel Herrod of Clear Spring Creamery, a previous grant recipient. "Thanks to the grant, I could work with the consultants, and they helped me make decisions. I've had a better balance in my bank account. We ran some metrics to quantify how the [decisions] have impacted us. Based on items sold, we saw a 23% increase in revenue. It was so beautiful."

The Marketing, Branding and Labeling Consultant grants provide financial assistance to help value-added dairy businesses access the private consulting resources they need to build their brand and to help cultivate our regional food economy, strengthen regional dairy food processing capacity, and create and improve economic opportunities for individual dairy producers and food businesses. The grant is made possible by the Northeast Dairy Business Innovation Center, which is a USDA initiative, and through the Ag Excellence line within the Commonwealth of PA budget.

To participate in the grant programs, dairy farms or businesses must complete an application. A \$100 application fee is required upon submission but will be reimbursed if the application is not accepted.

To learn more about each grant opportunity and to apply online, visit www.centerfordairyexcellence.org/dairy-excellence-grants or www.centerfordairyexcellence.org/marketing-branding-grants. Email Melissa Anderson at manderson@centerfordairyexcellence.org or call 717-636-0779 with questions.

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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.

Center for Dairy Excellence ▼ 2301 North Cameron St., Harrisburg, PA 17110 ▼ 717-346-0849 ▼

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