



CENTER FOR  
**Dairy**EXCELLENCE

## For Immediate Release

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### **GRANTS AVAILABLE TO PAIR PA DAIRY FARMS WITH PROFESSIONAL CONSULTANTS AND ADVISORY TEAMS**

*The Center's On-Farm Team and Dairy Decisions Consultant (DDC) Programs Are Both Open*

**Harrisburg, Pa.** – The Center for Dairy Excellence is now accepting applications for the On-Farm Team Grant Program and Dairy Decisions Consultant (DDC) Grant Program for the 2022-23 year. Dairy producers who are looking to improve profitability, create a transition plan, or plan a major business transformation are encouraged to apply for one of the team grant opportunities. For dairy farm families who want to work with a professional consultant with firsthand experience in the dairy industry to help make decisions in one of six strategic areas, they are encouraged to apply for a DDC grant. Leveraging funds provided through the Commonwealth of Pennsylvania, both grant programs opened in September of 2022. Limited grants are available on a first-come, first-served basis.

“By working with a respected team of advisors and consultants who have experience in different sectors of the dairy industry, dairy producers don’t have to feel like they are making decisions alone,” said Melissa Anderson, Programs and Operations Manager at the Center for Dairy Excellence. “Having an outside set of eyes and a fresh perspective has allowed previous grant recipients to make significant, strategically-sound business decisions that shaped the future of their dairy farms — such as investing in robotic milking technology, entering the value-added space, or creating detailed succession plans.”

The **On-Farm Team Grants** allow dairy producers to establish on-farm advisory teams with industry experts and trusted advisors to make strategic decisions at the farm level. There are three types of team grants available:

- **Dairy Profit Teams:** This grant offers a focused, broad-based approach to improving herd and dairy business profitability. Dairy farms can receive up to \$1,500 in reimbursements for paid team members and discovery-related costs.

*“The team program really helped us when we got into the planning and details. When we had everyone, including our veterinarian and bank, around the table, we actually changed some of our initial ideas because of the discussion we had with the team. It was exciting to hear from different people who were going to help us in the future describe where they thought we should go. It was very helpful.”* –Reid Hoover, Brook-Corner Holsteins, Lebanon County, Pa.

- **Dairy Transition Teams:** This grant focuses on transition in the business such as succession, change in business structure, or partnership. This grant is designed to help the farm establish a team to develop a transition or succession plan. 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.

*"That initial Transition Team meeting really launched everything for the future. By using that group of people to brainstorm ideas, ask some hard questions, look at opportunities to improve our cash flow, and have conversations about restructuring things, that's really what has allowed us to get to where we are today. Our goal was to continue dairying, but we were really open to however things would shake out and what that plan looked like."* –Jared Kurtz, Kurtland Farms, Berks County, Pa.

- **Dairy Transformation Teams:** This 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 need to cut out [certain aspects]. Now we know how far we can go and how many extra things we can add to this barn. Especially for a farm our size, it's 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."* –Donny Bartch, Merrimart Farms, Perry 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.

The **Dairy Decisions Consultant (DDC) Grants** pair dairy farm families with professional consultants who can help make decisions that will shape the future of their operation. The Center for Dairy Excellence offers a list of more than 20 Dairy Decisions Consultants with extensive expertise in different business sectors. Farms can receive up to \$4,000 to work with a consultant who can help enhance business performance, reach financial benchmarks, and explore new opportunities.

"The DDC grant really transcended us to where we are now. It gave us the opportunity to [figure out our next steps] making yogurt through the funds," said Stephanie Painter of The Painterland Sisters, a previous DDC grant recipient. "With our consultants' help, we've figured out how to go into this retail industry that's really hard to puncture. We're working with distributors and brokers and learning how to deal with small and big wholesale accounts. It's a whole other language, and without the consultants, we definitely wouldn't know what we're doing."

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

- **Employee Management & Communication** – Employee management is more than just ensuring that your employees are doing their job. It consists of procedures and strategies that can help you measure, monitor, and interact with the workforce that plays a huge role in your business.

- **Business Planning & Structure** – Business planning is a necessity to help manage volatility and create a roadmap for decision-making in all aspects of the business.
- **Product Marketing & Labeling** – Effective marketing and labeling of your branded dairy products can create a more positive impact on your customers and their purchasing decisions.
- **Direct Marketing** – Directly marketing products made from your milk to consumers can help a farm capture more revenues, but the processing and branding business can be complex.
- **Animal Welfare** – Veterinarian consultants will help farms establish animal welfare protocols related to the FARM Program as well as help train employees in FARM compliance.
- **Financial Management** – Financial management and planning can provide dairy farm families with professional consulting resources to help make future decisions.

“We had several opportunities in front of us that ranged from real estate purchase and diversification to expansion or remodel. We had a lot on the table at one time, so we were just trying to find a way to proceed and figure out our best options,” shared Ron Wenger of Hollowacres Farm LLC in Franklin County, a previous DDC grant recipient. “Having the DDC program pay for a consultant to dig into the financial details and various options was very beneficial. The program helped us by taking the extra time to flesh out all the different positives and negatives of each option.”

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.

Limited grants are available for the 2022-23 year for both programs, 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](http://www.centerfordairyexcellence.org/grants) and [www.centerfordairyexcellence.org/ddc](http://www.centerfordairyexcellence.org/ddc) to learn more and apply online. Contact Melissa Anderson at 717-636-0779 or [manderson@centerfordairyexcellence.org](mailto:manderson@centerfordairyexcellence.org) 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](http://centerfordairyexcellence.org).

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