

APPALACHIAN
sustainable
DEVELOPMENT

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Applications are now open for \$16 million dollars in Business Builder Subaward grants for local and regional farm and food businesses

DUFFIELD, Va. – As a partner in the Appalachia Regional Food Business Center (the Center), Appalachian Sustainable Development (ASD) is now accepting applications for the Business Builder Subawards program that will award a total of \$16 million to farm and food businesses throughout Tennessee, Kentucky, Ohio, West Virginia, and parts of Virginia, Maryland, and Pennsylvania.

The Business Builder Subawards are made possible by the U.S. Department of Agriculture (USDA), who recently awarded more than \$40 million to Rural Action to create the Center, for the purpose of helping food and farm businesses strengthen existing connections with markets through increased efficiency in aggregation and distribution. This institution is an equal opportunity provider. This funding is part of a \$420 million national effort, called the USDA Regional Food Business Center initiative, which established a total of 12 Centers across the country to carry out similar work.

There are five cycles of grant funding, and each cycle will award approximately \$3 million. The first cycle, open now, will close at noon EST on November 1. The remaining cycles will run from Spring 2025 through the Fall 2027. Applications are available online at ASD's website, www.asdevelop.org, or on the Center's website at www.arfbc.org.

As a partner, ASD will provide applicants with grant writing support, mentoring, and business planning services. Applicants will also receive resources that support food and farm businesses with market entry and strengthen existing connections with urban markets meaning food and farm businesses can sell more products to more people. For many communities in Central Appalachia, these opportunities can be transformative.

“We are so thrilled to be a part of this Business Builder Subaward program. For a long time, there were not many resources for small to medium sized farmers and food producers in Central Appalachia. This

program allows us to connect with and serve those farmers and food entrepreneurs by making sure we provide financial resources, training and access that will make a real difference for them and their communities,” comments Kathlyn Terry Baker, Appalachian Sustainable Development, CEO.

USDA Regional Food Business Centers will have three main responsibilities:

- **Coordination** - The Regional Food Centers will act as regional hubs coordinating across geographic areas with USDA, other federal, state, and tribal agencies with relevant resources, regional commissions, stakeholders, and the other Regional Food Centers. They will engage with stakeholders and partners to develop and implement strategic and funding plans for serving the region through technical assistance and capacity building. They will conduct outreach to underserved communities and businesses.
- **Technical Assistance** - The Regional Food Centers will provide direct business technical assistance to small- and mid-sized food and farm businesses (producers, processors, aggregators, distributors, and other businesses within the food supply chain) and food value and supply chain coordination. Each Regional Food Center will identify priority areas for technical assistance (e.g., aggregation/distribution, specialty crop processing for institutions) for the region it plans to serve.
- **Capacity Building** – The Regional Food Centers will provide financial assistance through Business Builder Subawards up to \$100,000 to support projects focused on regional needs and businesses that are working towards expansion and other investment. These subawards may support staff time, business planning activities, software implementation, the purchase of special purpose equipment, such as food safety, processing and packaging equipment, and value chain coordination, and other expenses associated as outlined in the RFA.

About Appalachian Sustainable Development (ASD)

Growing a stronger Appalachia through agriculture. That’s what drives ASD’s commitment to build a thriving regional food and agriculture system that benefits every Appalachian. Since 1995, ASD has been working to provide hope and make a difference for the people who call the region home. What began as opportunities for struggling tobacco farmers to grow fruits and vegetables has become lasting solutions to regional challenges that impact workforce development, agriculture education, food access, economic development, health and resource conservation. To further expand that work, ASD is now developing a destination agriculture campus where innovation meets agriculture in Washington County, Virginia. To learn more about ASD, visit: <https://asdevelop.org>.

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