



2026 Applicant Guide and Request for Applications

WVFMA \$5,000 Mini-Grant Program

This guide explains who may apply, what the program can fund, how to complete each part of the application, and how applications will be reviewed.

At a glance

Application opens	Friday, August 7, 2026
Application deadline	Friday, September 18, 2026, at 11:59 p.m. Eastern Time
Maximum award	Up to \$5,000 per project. Awards may be lower based on project merit and available funds.
Program focus	Tangible infrastructure and marketing items that directly benefit an eligible West Virginia market and the people it serves.
How to apply	Complete the 2026 online application and upload the required Excel budget file .
Questions	executivedirector@wvfarmers.org

First time applying? You do not need special grant-writing language. Use direct answers, explain what your market needs, list exactly what you plan to buy or build, and make sure your budget matches your written answers.

1. About the program

The West Virginia Farmers Market Association (WVFMA) Mini-Grant Program supports practical, tangible items that strengthen farmers markets and other eligible direct-to-consumer market types across West Virginia. Applicants may request up to \$5,000 for one project and may combine eligible infrastructure and marketing items in the same request.

The program is funded by the West Virginia Department of Agriculture (WVDA). WVFMA encourages applicants to propose the items that fit their own market, including needs that are not listed in the examples below.

2. Who may apply

1. Be a West Virginia Department of Agriculture registered farmers market.
2. Be a current member of the West Virginia Farmers Market Association. Membership information: wvfarmers.org/become-a-member
3. Submit no more than one application for the market.

Eligible market types

For this program, eligible applicants may include traditional farmers markets, roadside stands, consignment markets, on-farm stands, mobile markets, and online markets in West Virginia. This is for established markets, not new start ups.

Previous awards and board affiliations

- Markets that previously received a WVFMA mini-grant may apply again.
- Applicants that have not previously received WVFMA mini-grant funding receive a two-point scoring bonus.
- A market may apply when a WVFMA board member is one of its employees, board members, or vendors.
- A for-profit business owned by a WVFMA board member is not eligible.

Not sure whether you qualify? Ask WVFMA before you spend time completing the application. Contact executivedirector@wvfarmers.org.

3. What the grant may fund

Requests must be for tangible items that directly strengthen market operations, visibility, or service to customers and vendors. The examples below are not the only possible eligible items.

Category	Type	Examples
Infrastructure	Equipment	Coolers, refrigerators, CoolBot trailers, display cases
Infrastructure	Structures	Shade structures or tents, pavilions, storage, or other permanent improvements
Infrastructure	Fixtures	Durable tables, chairs, and other long-lasting furnishings
Infrastructure	Operations technology	Wi-Fi hotspots, point-of-sale devices, tablets, or laptops used for market management
Infrastructure	Visitor tracking	Handheld or infrared customer counters
Marketing	Visibility and wayfinding	Branded signs, directional signs, and wayfinding
Marketing	Printed promotion	Flyers, brochures, and banners

Costs that are not allowed

- Salaries
- Indirect costs or general overhead
- Items or costs that are not part of the approved project budget unless WVFMA gives prior approval

Tangible-items rule: This program is built around items the market will own and use. If a proposed cost is mainly a service, fee, subscription, or other non-tangible expense, contact WVFMA before including it.

4. Before you begin

Gather the following information before opening the online form:

Check	Item to prepare
☐	The market's legal or commonly used name, mailing address, phone number, and contact email
☐	Confirmation of WVDA market registration and current WVFMA membership
☐	Current annual Market Metrics status
☐	Best available estimates for weekly vendors, weekly customers, and annual sales
☐	A clear list of the items you plan to purchase or build
☐	Current price estimates for each item, including quantities
☐	A realistic project start date and end date
☐	A plan for tracking whether the project helped
☐	Information about other funding the market received this year
☐	The completed WVFMA Excel budget template, renamed to include the market's name

5. How to submit the application

1. Open the 2026 WVFMA Mini-Grant online application when the application period begins.
2. Download the Excel budget template from the application.
3. Rename the budget file so the filename includes your market's name. Example: River County Farmers Market - 2026 Budget.xlsx.
4. Complete every required question in the online form.
5. Upload the completed Excel budget file in the budget section.
6. Review the form, confirm that you have authority to apply, and submit by the deadline.

Google account notice: Google will record the name, email address, and profile photo connected to the account used to upload files and submit the form.

W-9 notice: The application asks you to confirm that you can provide a W-9 using a Social Security number or Employer Identification Number. Selected recipients must provide the completed W-9 before payment. Do not place passwords in the form.

6. How to answer the market questions

These questions help reviewers understand the size and type of market. Use the best information you have. When a number is estimated, use a reasonable good-faith estimate and keep a note of how you calculated it.

Application question	Plain-language guidance
How often does the market operate?	Choose the option that best matches the normal schedule: year-round or seasonal, days per week, or by appointment.
Nutrition benefits accepted	Select every program currently accepted: SNAP/EBT, SNAP Stretch, WIC, Senior Vouchers, working toward acceptance, or none.
Vendors or farm-market setup	Give the usual weekly vendor count. If the operation is not a multi-vendor market, briefly describe how products are sold.
Tourist or local customers	Choose the option that best describes most shoppers: heavy tourist traffic or mostly local.
Estimated weekly customers	Use a typical week, not only the busiest event. If estimated, use a consistent method such as a manual count or recent sample day.
Estimated annual sales	Use the best available market records or a reasonable estimate. Do not present an estimate as an exact audited amount.

7. How to answer the project questions

Reviewers can only score what is written in the application. Be specific, keep each answer within the word limit, and make sure the project description, timeline, outcomes, and budget describe the same project.

1. Project overview

Form limit: 500 words

- State the problem or need at the market.
- List the specific items or improvements you want the grant to pay for.
- Give quantities when known.
- Explain where and how the items will be used.
- Explain who will use or benefit from the project, including vendors, customers, or the wider community.

Clearer wording example: Instead of writing only 'We need tables,' explain how many durable tables are needed, where they will be used, what current problem they solve, and how they will improve market operations.

2. Goals and expected outcomes

Form limit: 300 words

- Name one to three results you expect from the project.
- Connect each result to the item being purchased or built.
- Explain how the project will benefit both the market and the community it serves.
- Use measurable language when possible, but do not invent a target that the market cannot realistically track.

3. Implementation timeline

- Give a proposed project start date and end date.
- List the main steps, such as final pricing, ordering, delivery, installation, and first use.
- Allow enough time for shipping, construction, setup, or seasonal use.

- Use dates that fit the project. WVFMA will provide selected recipients with the final award and reporting schedule.

4. Measuring success and impact

Form limit: 300 words

- Name what you will track and how often you will track it.
- Use measures that fit the project. Examples may include customer counts, vendor counts, number of market days an item is used, sales records, use of a storage unit, product loss, sign placement, or short customer/vendor feedback.
- Describe the starting point when you have one, so the result can be compared with conditions before the project.
- Name who will keep the records and what evidence will be available for the report.

8. How to prepare the budget

The Excel budget and the written budget narrative are both required. They should agree with each other and with the project overview.

- List each item separately whenever practical.
- Show the quantity, estimated unit cost, and estimated total for each item.
- Keep the WVFMA amount requested at or below \$5,000.
- Use current price estimates and check your math before uploading the file.
- In the budget narrative, explain what each item is and why it is needed.
- Make it clear which costs are requested from WVFMA and which costs, if any, will be paid by another source.

Budget changes after award: Use funds according to the approved budget. Ask WVFMA for approval before changing how the award will be spent. Unapproved changes may require funds to be returned.

9. How applications will be reviewed

Applications submitted by the deadline will be reviewed by a selection committee appointed by WVFMA. The committee will include qualified members of the agriculture community.

Scoring area	Points	What reviewers need to see
Project overview	25	A clear need, specific items, intended use, and the people who will benefit
Goals and expected outcomes	20	Practical results that connect directly to the proposed project
Budget breakdown	15	A complete, reasonable, accurate budget that matches the narrative
Implementation timeline	10	Realistic dates and steps for completing the project
Impact assessment	15	A workable plan for measuring results and keeping evidence
Market eligibility	5	Required registration, membership, and other eligibility conditions
Public benefit	10	A clear benefit to the market's vendors, customers, or community
Total possible score	100	Plus a two-point bonus for an applicant that has not previously received a WVFMA mini-grant

Selection and award amount

WVFMA will notify applicants of grant decisions by email after the review is complete. Individual awards may vary based on the merit of the proposed project and the amount of funding available. An award may be less than the amount requested, but it will not exceed \$5,000.

10. If your project is selected

1. Provide a completed W-9 so WVFMA can issue payment.
2. Confirm the mailing address where the check should be sent.
3. Use the award only for the approved project budget unless WVFMA approves a change in advance.
4. Keep receipts and project records.
5. Submit quarterly progress reports, receipts, and the final project survey using the templates and schedule WVFMA provides.
6. Complete WVFMA Market Metrics as required.

11. Final review before submitting

Check	Final confirmation
☐	The market meets the eligibility rules.
☐	Only one application is being submitted for the market.
☐	The request is for tangible items and does not include salaries or indirect costs.
☐	The project overview names the exact items and explains the need.
☐	The goals, outcomes, and community benefit are clear.
☐	The timeline includes a start date, end date, and practical steps.
☐	The success-measurement plan explains what will be tracked and how.
☐	The Excel budget is complete, accurate, renamed with the market's name, and uploaded.
☐	The budget total is no more than \$5,000 and matches the written narrative.
☐	Other project funding received this year is disclosed.
☐	The mailing address is correct because the check will be mailed there.
☐	The authorized-submitter and W-9 confirmation is answered Yes.
☐	The application will be submitted before 11:59 p.m. Eastern Time on September 18, 2026.

Questions and assistance

Contact WVFMA at executivedirector@wvfarmers.org if you have questions about eligibility, the budget, allowable items, or the application form. Our executive director is not on the selection committee so they are able to answer any questions or assist in your application.

The WVFMA Mini-Grant Program is funded by the West Virginia Department of Agriculture.