

Hello Chair Marcotte and Rep. Kimbell,

As context – I serve on the Working Lands Enterprise Board so it is with that vantage point that I am reaching out to you from.

**On Wednesday (6/10), the WLEB met and decided to make awards totalling \$205k to 15 applications** that we received in our lightning fast grant round. As I think you heard, we had a 10 day turn around for applications and received 124 applications requesting a total of \$2.1million. They were scored by about 20 reviewers, then the reviewers met on Tuesday of this week to recommend a top ranked slate to the full WLEB which met the next day.

When we reviewed the full list of 124 applicants, 25 applicants totaling \$492k were deemed to be ineligible for funding. That left \$1.4million in requests across 99 applicants. As I said, we were able to fund 15 applications totaling \$205k. **Thus – if we had any combination of State General Funds and CARES Act funding, we could conceivably grant up to \$1.4million in funding immediately – based on the eligible applications we already have in hand.**

Once those funds were out the door we could then initiate another lightning round application for the remaining funds. The Board is aware that CARES Act funding must be spent by 12/30/20 (not just obligated) and must be linked to clear COVID-19 impacts on the business.

Also it may be helpful for you to know that across the 15 businesses we will be funding with WLEF dollars, we selected a real mix of applicants – from primary and secondary wood manufacturers to dairy diversification to maple to meat processing and livestock operations as well as produce operators. Recall that one of the many benefits of the WLEF is our ability to provide support to both the wood/forest industry as well as the farm/food industry.

Please note, there are definitely projects that would benefit from a longer time horizon to complete than 12/30/20 ... which is why having State General Fund dollars in the mix is so important. For instance, to make substantive expansion of meat processing infrastructure in the state, that needs more than 6 months to make happen. So state funds spent strategically for dairy diversification and meat processing, as a for instance, are what is most needed. There are many businesses for whom an immediate injection of relief funds would make a big difference, which is where CARES Act funding then works best.

The following table was prepared by staff at VAAFM to indicate the category of grant related projects that were NOT funded yesterday, the # of projects it represents and the \$ requested ... this gives you a good idea of the spread of projects that are looking to be supported with state and CARES Act funding just from this initial quick grant round.

Category	Number of Projects	Total Request
Beverages	1	\$25,000
Dairy & Dairy Products	16	\$371,649
Forestry and/or Wood	3	\$45,020
Grain Crops	1	\$14,000
Hay & Forage Crops	2	\$46,000
Hemp	1	\$15,000

Maple	7	\$128,000
Non-dairy Livestock & Meat	10	\$165,495
Other	10	\$165,549
Primary Forestry	7	\$121,397
Secondary Forestry	7	\$112,040
Specialty Foods	2	\$16,200
Vegetables, Berries, Tree Fruit	13	\$174,015
<b>Total</b>	<b>80</b>	<b>\$1,399,365</b>

Please let me know if there is any additional information I may be able to provide or feel free to reach out to Abbey Willard at VAAFV for more details from them.

I can also speak to the importance of providing business assistance services to WL businesses at this time now. I know there is a request to provide \$200k in additional funding to VHCB's Farm & Forest Viability Program to do just that between now and December 30 (we support this move) – on top of the \$5million being considered that would be run through ACCD. We have been providing a lot of important and valuable business support services to WL businesses over the past 2.5 months and it has been a real life line for many of them as they navigate very chartered territory and uncertain waters. Happy to share more about this work if you are interested.

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