

Annual Report on the Vermont Dairy Promotion Council
Funds and Usage

6 V.S.A. § 2972

Submitted to:

Senate Committee on Agriculture

House Committee on Agriculture, Food Resiliency, and Forestry

Governor Phil Scott

By the:

Vermont Agency of Agriculture, Food and Markets

January 13, 2026

Statutory Authority

6 V.S.A. § 2972

- **§ 2972. Powers and duties**

(a) The Council shall administer and enforce this chapter and to that end shall plan and conduct dairy commodity advertising, publicity, sales promotion, and research and educational projects to increase the consumption of dairy products and to foster better understanding and more efficient cooperation between producers, dealers, and consumers of dairy products, and may contract for advertising, publicity, sales promotion, research, and educational services, and may employ and discharge advertising counsel, advertising agencies, dairy councils, and other agencies on a statewide, regional, or national basis as it shall deem the best interests of the State of Vermont for these purposes. It may disseminate information relating to dairy products and the importance thereof, either directly or through persons or parties contracted with.

(b) Included among the powers of the Council in connection with the enforcement of this chapter are the powers to require reports from any person subject to this chapter; to adopt, rescind, modify, and amend all proper and necessary rules and orders to administer this chapter, which rules and orders shall be adopted by publication in the manner prescribed by the Council and shall have the force and effect of law when not inconsistent with existing laws; to administer oaths, subpoena witnesses, take depositions, and certify to official acts; to require any dealer to keep such true and accurate records and to make such reports covering purchases, sales, and receipts of dairy products and related matters as the Council deems reasonably necessary for effective administration, which records shall be open to inspection by the Secretary of Agriculture, Food and Markets at any reasonable time and as often as may be necessary, but information thus obtained shall not be published or be open to public inspection in any manner revealing any individual dealer's identity, except as required in proceedings to enforce compliance; to keep accurate books, records, and accounts of all of its dealings; and to make annually a full report of its doings to the House Committee on Agriculture, Food Resiliency, and Forestry and the Senate Committee on Agriculture and the Governor, which shall show the amount of money received and the expenditures thereof. The report shall be submitted on or before January 15. The Vermont Agency of Agriculture, Food and Markets shall perform the administrative work of the Council as directed by the Council. The Council shall reimburse the Agency of Agriculture, Food and Markets for the cost of services performed by the Agency.

(c) The Council is hereby authorized to accept contributions from individuals or organizations to augment its funds.

(d) The Council in allocating the monies it spends for the promotional purposes set forth in this chapter shall consider the sources from which the milk comes, the areas into which the milk goes, and the nature of the population that consumes the milk, so that funds may be allocated proportionately if desired.

(e) The Council shall cooperate with other State agencies in its plans for advertisement and promotion and in particular with agencies specifically empowered to advertise and promote this State.

(f) The Council is authorized to cooperate with the U.S. government and any Agency thereof charged with similar responsibilities in connection with research, marketing, and pricing in the dairy industry, including federal Milk Market Administrators and their staffs in federally regulated markets, and is authorized to cooperate with the appropriate agencies of other states for the purpose of making such investigations, securing and transmitting such information, making available such services and facilities, and exercising such other powers with respect to the administration of this chapter as it deems necessary or appropriate to facilitate its administration in cooperation with the administration of similar acts in other states.

(g) To the extent that in its judgment it may deem advisable to do so in administering this chapter, the Council is authorized to enter into agreements with U.S. government agencies, federal Milk Market Administrators, and state agencies of other states with respect to the collection or audit of tax payments and the use of joint facilities and joint services. (Added 1965, No. 175, § 59; amended 1989, No. 256 (Adj. Sess.), § 10(a), eff. Jan. 1, 1991; 2003, No. 42, § 2, eff. May 27, 2003; 2007, No. 207 (Adj. Sess.), § 2, eff. June 11, 2008; 2021, No. 105 (Adj. Sess.), § 129, eff. July 1, 2022; 2023, No. 6, § 58, eff. July 1, 2023.)

Introduction

The Vermont Dairy Promotion Council (VDPC) is the statutorily identified body that makes decisions regarding the use of funds collected by the Vermont Agency of Agriculture, Food and Markets (VAAFMM) under the United States Department of Agriculture (USDA) mandated Dairy Research and Promotion Program, usually referred to as the “dairy check-off”. This program collects \$0.15 per hundredweight of milk sold from every dairy farmer who produces milk for sale, regardless of whether it is shipped to a processor or processed at a farmstead creamery. Of this, \$0.10 goes to the state for use and \$0.05 goes to the federal program. The program collects and uses funds following the calendar year.

In Vermont, organic cow dairy as well as goat and sheep producers are required to pay \$0.10 per hundredweight, which is not true of every state. Use of the funds follows federal law, and projects must support research or promotion of products and cannot support farm or production-based projects.

VAAFM collects the funds and performs administrative work for the VDPC. This includes fund management, project management, fund distribution, and organization of VDPC activities such as scheduling meetings, agenda setting, and facilitation.

2025 Activities

The VDPC offered its first public request for proposals following procurement guidelines outlined in Bulletin 3.5 – Procurement and Contracting Procedures. The Request for Proposals was developed by VAAFM based on feedback from the VDPC regarding funding priorities and project funding caps as follows:

- Consumer, Health Professional, and Youth Education - \$500,000 maximum per proposal
- Farmer Development - \$250,000 maximum per proposal
- Consumer Engagement, Marketing, and Promotion - \$500,000 maximum per proposal
- Research - \$250,000 maximum per proposal
- Vermont Specific Projects - \$250,000 maximum per proposal

Based on milk production data received by VAAFM's Dairy Section and projections for the remainder of calendar year 2025, a total of \$1,900,000 was made available at the time the Request for Proposals was released.

A total of 31 bids were received with a request of \$8,725,154.00.

On October 21, 2025, the VDPC met to make award decisions. Based on updated milk production numbers, the total amount of funds available was updated to \$2,250,000.

The following projects were selected for funding:

Company	Project Title	Focus Area	Budget
Agency 29	Say Cheese Vermont!	Vermont specific and Consumer Marketing	\$246,500.00
New England Dairy Promotion Board Inc	Building Trust with Youth and Parents Through School Nutrition and Health Professionals	Consumer, Health Professional, and Youth Education	\$500,000.00
New England Dairy Promotion Board Inc	Building Trust of Dairy Among Consumers (1)	Consumer Engagement, Marketing, and Promotion	\$400,000.00
New England Dairy Promotion Board Inc	Driving Sales of Dairy Among Consumers (2)	Consumer Engagement, Marketing, and Promotion	\$400,000.00
New England Dairy Promotion Board Inc	Driving Demand and Sales for Dairy in Vermont	Vermont specific	\$139,120.00
New England Dairy Promotion Board Inc	Building Trust in Dairy in Vermont: Amplifying Voices that Influence Vermont Consumers	Vermont specific	\$190,494.00
Pluck	Happy Vermont podcast	Consumer Engagement, Marketing, and Promotion	\$18,810.00
Pluck	VermontDairy.com Revitalization	Consumer Engagement, Marketing, and Promotion	\$30,000.00
Vermont Cheese Council Inc	Promoting Vermont Cheese to Buyers, Industry, & Public Audiences	Consumer Engagement, Marketing, and Promotion	\$90,002.00
Vermont Cheese Council Inc	Increasing Vermont Cheese Sales & Consumption through the Vermont Cheesemakers Festival, Vermont Cheese Trail, and Vermont Cheese Week	Vermont specific	\$78,133.00
Vermont Dairy Industry Association	VDIA's Promotion and Marketing Focused Activities	Vermont specific	\$5,000.00
Vermont Dairy Producers Association	Promotion and Education of Vermont's: "State of Farming"	Vermont specific and Consumer Marketing	\$126,390.00

Total funding for the selected projects equaled \$2,224,499. Given that there were funds remaining (\$25,551), the VDPC opted to request a rescoped and budgeted proposal from University of Vermont focused on youth education. The updated proposal is currently under review.

VAAFM initiated the contracting process with all selected organizations using the VTBuys interface. All contracts were drafted by the end of calendar year 2025, with final processing and projects starting in January 2026.

Additional information about the Request for Proposal process, questions and answers, and the VDPC October meeting recording can be found here:

<https://agriculture.vermont.gov/food-safety-consumer-protection-0/milk-dairy/vermont-dairy-promotion-council>