

Terms and Conditions – 2015/2018

Agriculture Opportunities Fund (AOF) Grant Program

Purpose

The purpose of the AOF is to provide funding assistance to eligible organizations to enable them, through partnership with others, to promote long term sustainability of the agricultural industry and rural communities in their areas. The focus is on growth, environment, economic development and sound extension methodology. This will contribute to rural development across Alberta.

There are three main program areas for the AOF:

- a. Forages and Livestock
- b. Annual and Special Crops
- c. Environment

The overall **outcomes** of the AOF are:

- a. Enhanced competitiveness at the farm gate through: cost reduction, increased revenue and increased productivity.
- b. Supporting technology adoption by the development of applied research based information and demonstration through effective extension delivery.
- c. Enhanced awareness, understanding and implementation of environmentally beneficial agricultural practices and the importance of responsible stewardship of land, air, water and biodiversity.

1. Definitions

In these AOF Program Terms and Conditions, the following terms have the following meanings:

- 1.1 AOF: means Agriculture Opportunity Fund.
- 1.2 AOF Program: means the AOF Grant Program.
- 1.3 AOF Program Terms and Conditions: means the terms and conditions for the AOF Program set out in this document, as may be amended.
- 1.4 Applicant: means the organization that submits a completed and signed AOF Program application form and meets the eligibility criteria in s. 2.1.
- 1.5 Application: means the AOF Program application form and all documents required to be submitted pursuant to that form and the AOF Program Terms and Conditions.
- 1.6 ARD: means Alberta Agriculture and Rural Development.
- 1.7 Fiscal Year: means the AOF programming year which is April 1st to March 31st.
- 1.8 Merit Based Evaluation: means a formal evaluation process in which Applications are rated based on the criteria outlined in Appendix "A" of the AOF Program application form.
- 1.9 Minister: means the Minister of Agriculture and Rural Development (ARD) and authorized representative(s).
- 1.10 Term: means the ARD fiscal time period for the AOF Program, being April 1st, 2015 to March 31st, 2018.
- 1.11 AOF Committee: means a joint producer/government committee appointed by ARD.

2. Eligibility

2.1 Eligible Applicants – To be eligible to apply to the Program, an organization must:

- (a) be a community-based agriculture related organization;
- (b) be incorporated as a society; and
- (c) have a focus on applied research and extension.

2.2 Eligible Activities – The following activities are eligible under the AOF Program:

- a. partnership, network and alliance formation;
- b. extension program planning and coordination;

- c. meetings and workshops and conferences;
- d. applied research, demonstration and tours; and
- e. staff training related to program delivery.

2.3 Ineligible Activities:

- a. Any activity deemed by the Minister not to be eligible

2.4 Eligible Expenses:

Eligible expenses under the AOF Program include:

- a. manpower;
- b. materials, supplies and services to support the program activities;
- c. maintenance to existing facilities;
- d. tuition fees for training and education;
- e. travel costs related to the program;
- f. in-kind costs for (must have receipts to provide an auditable trail):
 - i. seed;
 - ii. fertilizer;
 - iii. pesticides/crop inputs;
 - iv. facility rental;
 - v. equipment rental; and
 - vi. non-government speaker costs.

2.5 Ineligible Expenses:

Expenses that are not eligible under the AOF Program include:

- a. Goods and Services Tax (GST);
- b. Alcohol
- c. expenses funded through any other federal or provincial government grants, programs or projects;
- d. in-kind costs for:
 - i. office rent in government buildings;
 - ii. speaker fees from any government employee (includes all levels of government);
 - iii. producer contributions of any kind such as land, labour, mileage etc.; and
 - iv. livestock arrangements of any kind; and
- e. any other expense deemed by the Minister not to be an eligible expense.
- f. Capital items over \$5,000.00

3. Applications

- 3.1 Applications for the Term must be received by ARD or postmarked on or before January 9, 2015.
- 3.2 Applications must be submitted in a PDF electronic version to Fred Young, AOF Program Manager, at fred.young@gov.ab.ca or mailed to Fred Young, AOF Program Manager, Agriculture and Rural Development, Provincial Building, Room 106, 4409-44th Street, Stony Plain, AB T7Z 1N4. The Applicant must also provide additional copies of the Application upon request by the AOF Committee.
- 3.3 Following the submission of an Application pursuant to section 3.2, the Applicant must also make a presentation to the AOF Committee.
- 3.4 The AOF Committee shall:
 - (a) review Applications for accuracy and completeness;
 - (b) evaluate Applications using a Merit Based Evaluation process;
 - (c) hear Applicant presentations; and
 - (d) make funding recommendations to the Minister.

- 3.5 Submission of an Application does not entitle the Applicant to a grant under the AOF Program.
- 3.6 The Minister may reject any Application that is ineligible, inaccurate or incomplete in the sole discretion of the Minister.

4. Funding Level

- 4.1 Funding is based on the results of the Merit Based Evaluation process. The AOF Committee shall evaluate Applications and make recommendations to the Minister, and the Minister shall make the final decision with respect to funding.
- 4.2 Subject to section 4.3, if an Applicant is approved for a grant, the Applicant must match the grant with the Applicant's own contributions on a 70% grant and 30% Applicant ratio.
- 4.3 The Applicant's matching dollars are subject to the following requirements:
 - (a) the Applicant's matching dollars must not include:
 - i. funding received directly or indirectly from the provincial government;
 - ii. municipal agriculture service board environmental stream grant contribution; and
 - iii. the in-kind costs listed in s. 2.5(c); and
 - (b) in-kind shall only be a maximum of 30% of the matching required (30% of 30%).
- 4.4 There are limited funds within the AOF Program. Notwithstanding an Applicant being approved for funding, funding in each Fiscal Year is subject to the availability of funds for the AOF Program.
- 4.5 In the event that provincial funding levels are changed, to the extent that the money available to the Minister to make the grant is reduced or eliminated, the Minister may, in his sole discretion, cancel or reduce the amount of the grant.

5 Payments

- 5.1 If an Applicant's Application is approved by the Minister, the Applicant will be required to enter into a three year term grant agreement with the Provincial Crown prior to any payment being made to the Applicant.
- 5.2 Subject to the terms and conditions of the grant agreement, and subject to Ministerial approval and to the availability of funds for the AOF Program in each Fiscal Year of the Term, the Minister expects to pay the grant funding to approved Applicants as follows:
 - (a) Payment for the 2015/2016 Fiscal Year programming following execution of the grant agreement;
 - (b) Payment for the 2016/2017 Fiscal Year programming following receipt of the following, to the satisfaction of the Minister:
 - i. a copy of the Applicant's latest annual financial statements submitted within 30 days of the date they are completed. The annual financial statements must be in the form of an audit report or a review engagement report;
 - ii. a signed copy of the Applicant's progress report for the 2015/2016 Fiscal Year submitted no later than November 30, 2015; and
 - iii. a signed copy of the Applicant's year-end report for the 2015/2016 Fiscal Year submitted no later than April 30, 2016. The year-end report must include a certified statement of the 2015/2016 Fiscal Year program income and expenses.
 - (c) Payment for the 2017/2018 Fiscal Year programming following receipt of the following, to the satisfaction of the Minister:
 - i. a copy of the Applicant's latest annual financial statements submitted within 30 days of the date the report is completed. The annual financial statements must be in the form of an audit report or a review engagement report;
 - ii. a signed copy of the Applicant's progress report for the 2016/2017 Fiscal Year submitted no later than November 30, 2016; and

- iii. a signed copy of the Applicant's year-end report for the 2016/2017 Fiscal Year submitted no later than April 30, 2017. The year-end report must include a certified statement of the 2016/2017 Fiscal Year program income and expenses.

5.3 Applicants cannot assign or defer any payment under the AOF Program.

6 AOF Program Reporting Requirements

6.1 The Applicant shall provide the Minister with reporting, to the Minister's satisfaction and on dates specified by the Minister. These reports shall include:

- (a) a copy of the Applicant's annual financial statements, in the form of an audit report or a review engagement report, due within 30 days of the date the report is completed for each year of the Term;
- (b) a progress report due November 30th of each year during the Term;
- (c) a year-end report due April 30th of each year during the Term;
- (d) a report on any material events, developments or circumstances arising in relation to the approved activities; and
- (e) any other reports requested by the Minister.

7 Program and Activity Completion

The Applicant must complete all programs and activities described in the Application between the start date and the completion date stated in the Application.

8 Ministerial Discretion

The Minister has the absolute discretion to determine the eligibility of any Applicant and any payments due under the AOF Program. The decision of the Minister is final.

9 Verification

9.1 In this section, "Minister" includes any agent appointed by the Minister to assist with audit and verification under the AOF Program. By accepting the AOF Program payment, the Applicant:

- a. agrees to provide additional information and records as the Minister may require to verify the Applicant's eligibility for payment from the AOF Program;
- b. authorizes the Minister to obtain information from and release information to any government department, agency, or other body to verify the Applicant's eligibility for payment; and
- c. agrees to give the Minister access to examine their business operation for the sole purpose of verifying submitted information. The Applicant agrees to make available to the Minister all records and books of account necessary to verify their eligibility under the AOF Program. If the Applicant fails to provide records within a reasonable time on reasonable notice, as determined by the Minister, the Applicant may be required to refund any payments received under the AOF Program, as well as forfeit any future payments under the AOF Program.

10 AOF Program Changes and Termination

10.1 The Minister may change or terminate the AOF Program, or revise the AOF Program Terms and Conditions by posting revised AOF Program Terms and Conditions on the ARD website (www.agric.gov.ab.ca).

10.2 An Application shall be administered by, and the grant provided by the Minister to the Applicant shall be governed by, the AOF Program Terms and Conditions that were posted on the ARD website as of the date the Application was received.

11 False or Misleading Information

An Applicant who provides false or misleading information on any Application under the AOF Program foregoes all rights to benefit from the AOF Program.

12 Collection of Information

The Applicant acknowledges that the information provided to the Minister regarding this Application is subject to both the access and privacy provisions of the Freedom of Information and Protection of Privacy Act (Alberta).