

Agriculture Opportunities Fund Guidelines



Revised Oct 20/2008

1. Purpose of the Fund

Funding provides assistance to eligible organizations to enable them, through partnership with others, to improve the economic well being of the agricultural industry and rural communities in their areas. The focus is on growth, economic development, and sound extension methodology.

This will contribute to rural development across Alberta. The overall outcomes of the Agriculture Opportunities Fund 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.

II. Operation of Fund

1. Annual fund of \$1.5 million dollars.
Matching requirements, 70:30 ratio.
Cash contributions only maybe used for matching purposes. No other government of Alberta Provincial dollars can be used as matching funds.
2. Fund is focused on results and provides support to targeted programs with clear and achievable outcomes.
3. Agriculture Opportunities Fund requests applications for a 3-year period, annual progress program reports and final program reports that reflect financial accountability and outcomes achieved are required by ARD. The reports are also required to ensure release of grant payments in subsequent years.
4. Adjustments to funding could be made to the program on an annual basis as parts of the program will be completed, other parts start up and yet other parts of the program may have to be changed/dropped for unanticipated reasons.

III. Eligible Organizations.

Organizations – community based/agriculture related organizations that are incorporated as societies or cooperatives with a focus on Applied Research and Extension.

IV. Eligibility Criteria

1. The funds' focus is for programs that:
 - 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.
2. Programs are and have a clear focus on outcomes to be achieved. They will not replace existing programs that are already being delivered through industry, agribusiness or other government agencies.

Outcomes should be SMART:

Specific: adequately clear so that if someone else had to take over management of the project, they would understand what is expected.

Measurable: must be able to measure your success through deliverables.

Agreed Upon: managers and stakeholders must agree on the goals prior to planning. Responsibility for achieving each goal must be identified (who is responsible?)

Realistic: must be possible, or at least be within the realm of possibility.

Time-bound: there must be a definite finish date established.

3. Programs must be shown to have significant economic benefits (growth, profitability) to farmers/businesses/communities.
4. Programs include a variety of components such as extension, technology transfer, skill development and/or training programs that target farmers, ranchers, agri-business, processors and/or business alliances etc. by increasing awareness, understanding and knowledge for the adoption and development of needed/new practices, businesses, technologies and/or alliances.
5. Programs must demonstrate a collaborative effort with other groups such as municipalities, other economic development groups, small businesses, regional economic development alliances, research and innovation providers, producer groups, ARD, other government departments etc.
6. Program planning with ARD is encouraged. Not all projects within a program need to be jointly planned.

V. Eligible Activities

- Partnership, Network and Alliance Formation
- Extension program planning and coordination
- Demonstration and tours
- Meetings and workshops
- Demonstration and applied research

- Staff training related to program delivery

VI. Eligible Expenses

- Manpower
- Materials, supplies and services to support the program activities
- Capital expenditures and upgrades to existing facilities
- Tuition fees for training and education
- Travel costs related to the program

VII. Criteria for Evaluation of Programs Submitted for Agriculture Opportunities Funding

Programs will be evaluated based on the following criteria:

1. Clearly defined outcomes.
2. Clear measures with a well defined evaluation process to measure impact of the program.
3. Indication of strong collaboration and partnership with others.
4. Impact or benefit to the local or regional community and agriculture industry.
5. Indication of other government and/or private sector support for the program.
6. Technically sound, realistic and focused.
7. Strong linkage between applied research and demonstrations to extension activities.
8. Number and dollar value of paid memberships.
9. Links with Industry Growth Strategy/Agriculture and Food Research and Innovation Strategic Plan/ARD Business Plan.
10. Cost efficient program plan.
11. Leveraging of other funding sources.

VIII. Application Process.

1. Applicants submit a **three-year proposal** using the attached application form.
 - Identify the priority issues and opportunities that program responds to – some type of needs assessment is encouraged that involves asking others in the community/industry/government what the issues and opportunities are (major in-depth needs assessment is not required)
 - Define overall desired outcomes of the program, specific goals and objectives
 - Outline the strategies, actions and overall plan that will achieve your goals
 - Outline measures and an evaluation plan that illustrates how you will determine if program is having an impact.
 - Indicate who your program partners are and what role they will play in the program.

- Indicate how program links with ARD’s Business plan/Growth Strategy/Agriculture and Food Research and Innovation Strategic plan.
- Attach a program budget to the program plan
- Submit to ARD contact

2. Timelines

- New applications accepted – December 24/2008.
- AOF committee panel reviews all applications.
 - AOF committee make up.
 - Murray Greer – Leader of the Program
 - Ross Hutchison – Branch Head, Call Centre
 - Doug Wray – ARECA producer representative
 - Fred Young – AOF Coordinator
 - 3 new members will be joining soon.
- Each organization will give a presentation that will be structured as follows:
 - 2/3 of the presentation will be on how successful the organization has achieved their results in the past year.
 - 1/3 of the presentation will be on the upcoming year or on new programs.
 - Dates for these presentations have been set for Jan 28, 29th and 30^{th/09}.
- Funding decisions finalized by ARD AOF committee.
- Decision on funding by February 28th with funding flowing April 1st to organizations
- Flow of funding will be as follows: 70% - April, 15% upon receipt of previous years final report – May, and final 15 % upon receipt of progress report – Jan.

Download Applications and Reports



3. Reporting and Monitoring

- Progress reports due Dec 31st of each year.
- Year End reports due April 30th of each year.

- Progress and Year End reports must be in and complete on time to be eligible for funding in the following year.
- Reports (Progress and Year-end) must be sent both electronically and with eight copies including the signed original to the AOF coordinator.
- Reports will focus on 1) Financial status of program and 2) Outcomes achieved and 3) Impacts of program.
- Year-end financial statements must be audited or reviewed by a chartered accountant.
- After each report (progress and year-end) an AOF Accountability report will be sent to each association.

Appendix I

AAFRD's Business plan

Link unavailable at this time.

Program Planning information maybe found on the website www.aesa.ca - Farm Based Extension

1. Agriculture Opportunities Fund Coordinator – Day-to-day operation of the fund, coaching, support to applicants, links to appropriate partners with AAFRD.

Fred Young, AOF Coordinator, 106 Provincial Building, 4709-44 Avenue, Stony Plain AB T7Z 1N4

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2. Overall Leadership of the Agriculture Opportunities Fund – Murray Greer, Branch Head, Agriculture Grants Program

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