

§306-A. Agricultural Development Fund

1. Agricultural Development Fund. The commissioner shall establish the Agricultural Development Fund, referred to in this section as "the fund," to accelerate market development, adoption of technology and promotion of state agricultural products by state producers. [PL 2021, c. 710, §1 (AMD).]

2. Fund operation. The commissioner shall utilize the fund to:

A. Provide grants to public agencies and private for-profit entities and nonprofit entities based in the State to conduct market research or to undertake market promotion activities for the purpose of expanding existing markets and developing new markets for state agricultural products; [PL 2021, c. 710, §1 (AMD).]

B. Test and demonstrate new technologies related to the production, storage and processing of state agricultural products; and [PL 2021, c. 710, §1 (AMD).]

C. Provide technical assistance grants for conducting market research, feasibility studies, engineering studies, construction planning, land use planning, facility design and configuration planning and for funding the purchase of on-farm equipment and other technology purchases that directly support the growth of agricultural enterprises as defined in section 434. [PL 2021, c. 710, §1 (NEW).]

The commissioner may disburse grant money awarded to an applicant during any of the 3 fiscal years following award of the grant to an applicant.

[PL 2021, c. 710, §1 (AMD).]

3. Rulemaking. The commissioner shall establish, by rule, in a manner consistent with Title 5, chapter 375, subchapter 2-A criteria for the allocation of grant money, application requirements consistent with the provisions of this section, a schedule for accepting and reviewing applications, reporting requirements on grant expenditures and project results and any other administrative requirements necessary for the efficient implementation of this program. Rules adopted pursuant to this subsection are routine technical rules as defined in Title 5, chapter 375, subchapter 2-A. The commissioner is guided by the following criteria:

A. Applications may be submitted by public agencies and private for-profit entities and nonprofit entities based in the State in response to a request for proposals for competitive grants. The commissioner may also contract directly with public agencies and private for-profit entities and nonprofit entities for a special project under section 307; [PL 2021, c. 710, §1 (AMD).]

B. A percentage of the total cost of any project must be funded by the applicant or applicants and a percentage of the total cost must be funded from nonpublic sources. These percentages must be established by rule. A single grant may not exceed 50% of the total funds available to be granted in a given year; [PL 2013, c. 64, §1 (AMD).]

C. Information relative to market research or development activities provided to the commissioner prior to formal application, included in grant applications or provided to the commissioner to fulfill reporting requirements is confidential information and may not be publicly disclosed by the commissioner as long as:

(1) The person to whom the information belongs or pertains has requested that certain information be designated as confidential; and

(2) The commissioner has determined that the information gives the person making the request opportunity to obtain business or competitive advantage over another person who does not have access to the information or will result in loss of business or other significant detriment to the person making the request if access is provided to others; and [PL 1999, c. 72, §5 (NEW).]

D. When possible, the commissioner shall award grants to applicants representing diverse agricultural enterprises and geographic areas of the State. [PL 1999, c. 72, §5 (NEW).]
[PL 2021, c. 710, §1 (AMD).]

4. Advisory committee. The commissioner shall establish the Agricultural Development Committee to evaluate grant applications and review project results.
[PL 2021, c. 710, §1 (AMD).]

SECTION HISTORY

PL 1999, c. 72, §5 (NEW). PL 2013, c. 64, §§1, 2 (AMD). PL 2021, c. 710, §1 (AMD).

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