



GUIDELINES

LOUISIANA WORKFORCE DEVELOPMENT PROGRAM

Louisiana Department of Agriculture and Forestry
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Description

The purpose of this program is to ensure the continuation of a quality workforce for the agricultural industry and assist in the expansion of agricultural jobs by providing incentive payments to Louisiana agricultural businesses to encourage the creation and employment of internships.

Program Administration

- Program implementation, management and monitoring will be conducted by the Louisiana Agriculture Finance Authority (LAFA), a public agency organized pursuant to Louisiana Revised Statutes 3:264 et seq. and regulations promulgated by LAFA for this purpose.
- LAFA will conduct application intake.
- Monitoring of the awards shall be performed by the LAFA as detailed below.
- All parties shall comply with the anti-fraud measures detailed below, which shall not be construed to be an exclusive listing.

Program Definitions

Actual cost – the wages paid to an intern, reasonable allocation of fixed overhead expenses, and all incidental costs directly related to the internship.

Agricultural business – an agricultural producer, or a person or legal entity who engages in agriculture or provides support activities, products, or services to an agricultural producer and such products or services that are directly related to the planting, growing, production, harvesting, or processing of Louisiana products.

Beginning farmer – a farmer, rancher, or operator of non-industrial private forestland who is in the first 10 years of operation or a person intending or aspiring to begin such an operation.

Commissioner – the commissioner of the Department of Agriculture and Forestry.

Department – the Department of Agriculture and Forestry

Director – the director of the Louisiana Agricultural Finance Authority (LAFA)

Immediate family member – the spouse, parent, sibling, or child of the owner, manager, chief executive officer, or president of an agricultural business; a person to whom the owner, manager, chief executive officer, or president stands as legal guardian or tutor; or any other person living in the household of the owner, manager, chief executive office, or president of an agricultural business by blood or marriage.

Intern – an individual who is a student enrolled at a Louisiana secondary or postsecondary institution or a young and beginning farmer or rancher employed by an agricultural business pursuant to the program.

LAFA – the Louisiana Agricultural Finance Authority which is within the Department of Agriculture and Forestry.

Program – the Louisiana Agricultural Workforce Development Program created with passage of House Bill 69/ Act 23 of the 2020 Second Extraordinary Session, which enacted R.S. 3: 285.



Qualifying internship – an internship meeting the requirements as necessary for the partial reimbursement of costs to employ intern(s).

Student – an individual who is enrolled in a Louisiana secondary or postsecondary institution.

General Eligibility

Agricultural businesses must meet the following eligibility requirements in order to be considered for the program.

1. Be physically located within the State of Louisiana;
2. Provide an internship with a place of work located within the State of Louisiana;
3. Have the ability to effectively supervise an intern;
4. Offer the intern an opportunity to obtain meaningful work experience, including, but not limited to:
 - a. At least one hundred thirty hours of work experience;
 - b. Not to exceed one year in duration; and
 - c. An hourly wage rate that is no less than the state's prevailing minimum wage rate.
5. Ensure compliance with all federal, state, and local laws including, but not limited to, the Fair Labor Standards Act as well as any other applicable labor and /or occupational safety laws and regulations. In such instances when both federal and state laws apply, the more stringent standard must be observed.

Intern applicants must meet the following eligibility requirements in order to be considered for the program.

1. Be a student enrolled in a Louisiana secondary or postsecondary institution; or
2. Be a beginning farmer or rancher, as defined by this Chapter, employed by an agricultural business.

Intern applicants shall not be:

1. A current or past employee of the participating agricultural business for which he or she will be an intern;
2. An immediate family member of the participating business applicant as defined under Program Definitions.

Internship Requirements

A qualifying internship shall be considered eligible for reimbursement from LDAF/LAFA upon meeting each of the following requirements. The internship must:

1. Include an educational focus preparing interns for a career in one or more occupational areas including, but not limited to:
 - a. agribusiness
 - b. animal husbandry
 - c. crop production
 - d. farm management
 - e. agronomy
 - f. natural resources
 - g. forestry
 - h. research and development
 - i. marketing and sales
 - j. food safety and/or maintenance
 - k. repair of machinery and equipment



2. Provide an educational experience of at least 130 hours per intern and not exceed one year in duration per intern;
3. Pay intern(s) at a rate no less than the state's prevailing minimum wage to be paid in accordance with the participating business' normal payroll processes, but paid at least monthly;
4. Provide a supervisor for intern(s);
5. Provide worker's compensation insurance coverage for intern(s);
6. Commence within 30 days of the projected start date identified in the business application; and
7. Ensure that intern(s) do not displace current employee(s) of the participating business.

Application Process

Participating businesses and prospective intern(s) must receive approval by the LAFA director in order for a qualifying internship to be eligible for reimbursement.

1. Agricultural businesses interested in participating may apply for the program during the open application period from July 1 through September 1 of every year. Eligible applications will be reviewed and funded on a first-come, first-serve basis. An agricultural business must complete and submit the necessary application to LAFA within the application period. Only application forms prepared by LAFA for this purpose may be used. If funds remain, the director of LAFA will consider business applications on a rolling basis after the close of the open application period.
 - a. Eligible business applications will be reviewed upon receipt by LAFA staff. Decisions will be based on the needs of the program, legislative intent, applicable statute, and these rules.
 - b. Acceptance and rejection notifications will be sent via email within 30 days of completion of application review.
 - c. An agricultural business applicant shall submit a separate application for every internship position that it is requesting.
2. Upon approval of the agricultural business applicant, the intern candidate(s) selected by a participating business must complete and submit an intern application to the LAFA director. Only application forms prepared by LAFA for this purpose may be used.
 - a. In addition to the internship application, intern candidates must also submit a statement of career goals to the LAFA director.
 - b. Intern applications will be reviewed by LAFA staff and a determination of approval will be sent via email to the participating business within 10 business days of receipt of a fully completed intern application and statement.

Reimbursement

Participating agricultural businesses will be reimbursed up to the agreed upon amount at the conclusion of the internship upon presentation of an invoice and supporting documentation. Reimbursement will not exceed 50 percent of the actual cost to the business. The maximum amount a business may be reimbursed per internship is \$5,000.00.

1. An invoice requesting reimbursement shall be submitted to LAFA within 30 business days of the conclusion of the internship. The invoice must include the reimbursement amount requested and the actual costs incurred by the business to employ the intern.
2. The participating agricultural business shall submit copies of time sheets and pay stubs verifying the total amount paid to the intern during the internship. If the invoice includes costs for incidental expenses, those costs must be supported with proof of payment by the participating business.
3. The participating agricultural business shall also, as a requirement of reimbursement, complete a post-internship evaluation form, to be provided by LAFA staff.
4. In the event an internship ends prior to its scheduled completion, participating businesses may still be partially reimbursed for costs incurred.



Ongoing Grant Monitoring and Servicing of Recipients

LAFAs Monitoring

Note: The monitoring process detailed below generally describes currently anticipated monitoring processes and shall not limit the LAFAs, LDAF, their auditors, the Louisiana Legislative Auditor, or federal auditors in the scope of any audits which any of them may deem prudent to perform. This monitoring process may change.

- 1) LAFAs will monitor 100% of awarded grants.
- 2) Additional or other audits may also be performed from time to time at the discretion of either LDAF/LAFAs, the Office of the Governor, and/or the Legislative Auditor.
- 3) There will be two levels of monitoring performed by LAFAs:
 - a. Monitoring of Application and data entry
 - i. Applications will be checked for completeness
 - ii. Application will be checked for accuracy
 - iii. Review of supporting documentation
 - iv. Application back up materials will be checked
 - v. Data entry of application information into data base or CRM program
 - b. Monitoring of appropriate use of funds

Monitoring Findings

All monitoring findings shall be recorded in detail by LDAF/LAFAs, and shall detail both compliance of application and use of funds. Issues of non-compliance shall be categorized as either material or administrative. Recipients found to be in material non-compliance, or which received funds in error, may be required to repay grant funds to the State, as per the Terms and Conditions agreement.

Recipients found to be willfully fraudulent will be prosecuted.

Business Verification Process: Anti-Fraud, Waste and Abuse

A. Multiple verification of business eligibility

As part of their application process, applicants will be required to submit from the following documents in order to establish eligibility:

<u>Category</u>	<u>Required Documents</u>
Application	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Application form completed and signed by all owner(s)
Proof of Ownership	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 2019 or 2020 Business tax return, Schedule K-1 or related statement <p style="text-align: center;">OR</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 2019 or 2020 Personal tax return, Schedule C or Schedule F
Proof of Farm/Company Revenue over \$25,000	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 2019 or 2020 1065 or 1120 Business tax return • 2019 or 2020 Personal tax return, Schedule C or Schedule F
Proof of Identity of Owner(s)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Government issued photo ID



B. Statement of Understanding, including signed attestation of truth on grant application

In order for an application to be complete, producers and business owners are required to sign an attestation that includes:

Louisiana Company: The undersigned understands that the Louisiana Agricultural Workforce Development Program administrator has the authority to confirm with the Louisiana Secretary of State that the undersigned is registered to do business in Louisiana and is in good standing. The Secretary of State website may also be used to verify additional business information supplied in the application.

Income Tax Reporting: The undersigned understands that an IRS 1099G will be issued to grant award recipients. Award recipient understands that all or a portion of the grant funds may be treated as taxable income for U.S. or State income tax purposes.

Public Announcements: If the award recipient wishes to issue a public announcement concerning this award, the text of the proposed announcement must be submitted to LDAF/LAFA for review and approval prior to the release date. The Louisiana Department of Agriculture & Forestry must be mentioned in any public announcements.

No Right of Assignment or Delegation: The award recipient may not assign or otherwise transfer its rights or delegate any of its obligations under this letter unless expressly approved by LDAF/LAFA.

Revocation: LDAF/LAFA reserves the right to revoke this award if the funds are not used for the stated purpose. The award recipient understands and agrees that revocation of this award will require the return of all funds disbursed. The recipient will be obligated to repay some or all funds received under this program in the event that (a) its application including any information provided therewith or thereafter contains any material misrepresentations; or (b) the award was made in error and the applicant is not entitled to some or all assistance under the Program Guidelines.

Monitoring & Records:

- a) This award may be used only for the purposes stated herein. Documents providing evidence of the use of the funds from this award shall be retained by award recipient for five years after the close out of the program.
- b) LDAF/LAFA reserves the right to monitor usage of award funds. Such monitoring will include review that the entire amount of the award was used only for the expenses as specified above in accordance with your proposal.
- c) LDAF/LAFA may, during regular business hours and on reasonable notice to award recipient, inspect, audit, or copy records pertaining to this award. It is further agreed that the LDAF/LAFA and/or the Legislative Auditor of the State of Louisiana shall have the option of auditing all records and accounts of award recipient that relate to this grant at any time during normal business hours, as often as deemed necessary, to audit, examine, and make excerpts or transcripts of all relevant data.
- d) Recipient's failure to cooperate in such review will result in forfeiture of the award amount and recipient will be responsible for repaying the full amount of funds disbursed.

Information Access Authorization: For determination of eligibility, the applicant shall submit information requested on the Application Checklist.

In the event that additional information not included with the initial application checklist is required to obtain an approval of the application, the undersigned agrees to provide that information in a timely manner to the LDAF/LAFA employee processing the request.

The undersigned gives permission to LDAF/LAFA to use its name in LDAF/LAFA's mandated reports. No financial details will be released, except possibly the award amount, as this is considered public record.



The undersigned authorizes LDAF/LAFA to obtain personal credit reports and business credit reports, and also acknowledges that all information relative to the grant request, including the application and related documentation, becomes the property of LDAF/LAFA and will not be returned to the applicant.

Affirmation of Information Provided in Application: By the applicant's signature below, the applicant represents and warrants that he/she has read this application and Statement of Understanding and attests that all information and documentation furnished in connection with the application is true, accurate and complete to the best of his/her knowledge and that any regulations relative to the Louisiana Agricultural Workforce Development Program will be followed. Individuals and/or businesses found to be willfully providing fraudulent information may be prosecuted.

C. Consolidated entry of grant application into a universal electronic database

Entry of all applications into a single database will allow for screening and elimination of duplicate applications. All applicants will be cross referenced by individual name, business name and Federal Tax ID number or Social Security number.

D. Monitoring of Awards

All grants will be subject to detailed monitoring by the state, which may include verification of official documents against state records, review of all application materials, and physical site visits to verify appropriate use of funds.