Press Release | April, 2025

The Northwest and Rocky Mountain USDA Regional Food Business Center Announces Grantees for Colorado and Idaho Business Builder Grant Programs

Grants are designed to elevate the marketing and business initiatives of small- and mid-sized farms, ranches, and food businesses, while strengthening local and regional food supply chains.

Grantees have been chosen for two Business Builder Grant Programs funded by the Northwest and Rocky Mountain USDA Regional Food Business Center, signaling a successful round of specialized funding opportunities for small- and mid-sized farms, ranches, and food businesses in Colorado and Idaho.

The Colorado Business Builder Small Grants Program supported small- to mid-sized food and farm businesses that produce in, source from, and serve local and regional markets. Grant funds are designed to enhance business skills, strengthen viability, expand market access, and ultimately fortify local and regional food supply chains. The Center received 167 applications requesting a total of $1,460,000 and awarded $300,962 in funding to 32 Colorado food and farm businesses.

"The Colorado State Team is incredibly excited to see funding from the Center supporting 32 food and farm businesses across our state—from Montezuma County in the southwest to Routt County in the mountains and Yuma County on the eastern plains. These businesses represent the full spectrum of Colorado's vibrant food economy, including ranches, produce farms, value-added processors, aggregators, and food hubs," said Libby Christensen, Colorado State Team lead for the Center.

Ferment Culture, a microenterprise using local and regionally sourced ingredients in their fermented food business based out of Fort Collins, Colorado and Ray Family Farm, a pork operation in Joes, Colorado, are both examples of grantees taking innovative steps to grow their businesses and serve their communities. Fermented Culture, known for funky, delicious, and gut-healthy lacto-ferments using local ingredients from regenerative farms, will use the funds to invest in cold storage and additional fermenters to expand their capacity and improve operations, enabling them to keep pace with growing demand while supporting more local farms. Ray Family Farm, committed to sustainable agriculture, will invest in a frozen meat vending machine to enhance access to locally sourced pork while streamlining operations to ensure long-term success for future generations. These initiatives reflect a shared commitment to regenerative, local food systems, and community impact.

The Idaho Business Builder Grant Program also targeted small- to mid-sized food and farm businesses, with an emphasis on projects that involved collaboration between at least two Idaho-based entities (the applicant and at least one supply chain partner). These initiatives

play a crucial role in bolstering local food supply chains, ensuring that locally produced food reaches local markets more efficiently. The Center received 60 applications totaling $674,000 and funded 17 applications, awarding $207,467 to Idaho farm and food businesses.

“With these Idaho Business Builder grants, the Center is increasing the viability of Idaho farms and food businesses and strengthening local and regional supply chains resulting in a more profitable and resilient Idaho food system,” said Colette DePhelps, Idaho State Team co-lead.

Wing Over Farms in Moscow and Sustainable Meats in Kuna are two Idaho grantees committed to strengthening local food systems and supporting small farmers. Wing Over Farms is tackling rising egg prices and the challenges of avian influenza by investing in an egg washer and walk-in cooler, boosting efficiency and enabling them to double egg production and net income. Sustainable Meats is expanding its production and co-packing services to create new market opportunities for over 60 Idaho livestock and poultry producers, offering value-added meat products such as jerkies, fresh brats, summer sausages, and meat sticks. These strategic investments will not only increase local food availability but also drive economic growth for small-scale producers across the region.

Four additional Business Builder grant programs, one focused on Wyoming and three focused on the Center’s thematic priorities at the regional level, are wrapping up reviews and will be announced in the coming weeks. “Together, all of the businesses that have been and will be selected for Business Builder grants represent a valuable and timely investment in our region’s food systems,” said Lauren Gwin, who leads the Center’s Business Builder Program. “We are excited to support and track their development during their projects and into the future.”

From 2024 to 2027, the Northwest and Rocky Mountain USDA Regional Food Business Center is offering $6.75 million in grants across its six-state region.

About the Northwest and Rocky Mountain USDA Regional Food Business Center

The Northwest and Rocky Mountain Regional Food Business Center is a node for the region’s small and mid-tier food and farm businesses and local and regional food sector development initiatives by supporting cross-regional collaboration, providing and analyzing relevant and timely data, and serving as a gateway for USDA programs and other third-party funding opportunities. Over one quarter of the Center’s resources will be invested in farms, ranches or food businesses who need capital to launch and expand their businesses (known as **Business Builder grants**).

Contact Information

For media inquiries, please contact Chelsea Bonser (chelsea.bonser@colostate.edu)

For questions on Business Builder grant programs, click here.