



**BUTCHERY INNOVATION
EQUIPMENT ONLY
GRANT GUIDELINES**



IOWA DEPARTMENT OF AGRICULTURE & LAND STEWARDSHIP

Introduction

Choose Iowa is the state's signature brand for Iowa grown, Iowa raised and Iowa made food, beverages, and other agricultural products. A marketing initiative overseen by the Iowa Department of Agriculture and Land Stewardship, Choose Iowa builds on the growing demand for local foods. Choose Iowa creates new markets for Iowa farmers and provides consumers with more local choices. Choose Iowa also offers several cost-share grants which were created to assist Iowa farmers with their efforts to increase or diversify their agricultural product offerings, add value to agricultural products, enable new technologies and support alternative marketing strategies.

The **Choose Iowa Butchery Innovation and Revitalization Grant** was established for the purpose of awarding financial assistance to eligible businesses for the following projects per Iowa Code 2025, Section 15E.370:

- Expanding, refurbishing an existing or establishing a new business in the areas of:
 - State-inspected or federally inspected small-scale meat processing business.
 - Licensed custom locker.
 - Mobile slaughter unit that operates in compliance with the most current mobile slaughter unit compliance guide issued by the United States Department of Agriculture Food Safety and Inspection Service.
- Equipment necessary to expand processing capacity, including projects for:
 - Mobile slaughter or refrigeration units used exclusively for meat or poultry processing by a federally inspected, small-scale meat processing business
 - Licensed custom lockers.
 - State inspected small-scale meat processing businesses.

Overview

- This round of funding will be for **equipment only**.
- Maximum awarded up to \$20,000 per grant awardee.
- Applicants must provide a minimum of one-to-one

(1:1) financial match from private sources such as cash, financing or other non-federal or non-state grant funds for total project costs. In-kind contributions are not accepted.

- Example: An individual applying for a grant of \$5,000 must provide at least \$5,000 from other sources for a total project budget of \$10,000 or more.
- Grant funds are paid out as a reimbursement after grant project(s) are completed.
- Projects cannot be in progress before a grant application is submitted and must be able to be completed in 7 months or less.

Highlights	FY26
Total funds available to award	\$105,000
Maximum amount awarded per grant awardee	\$20,000

Grant Award Timeline

Grant program announced, and application period opens	October 12, 2026
Grant application deadline	November 20, 2026
Review committee scores applications	November 23- December 2, 2026
Awardees notified, and grant agreements issued	December 4, 2026
Awardees announced	Week of December 7, 2026
Funds dispersed to awardees	By reimbursement during grant term (December 2026 – June 30, 2027)

Eligible Applicants

Applicants must satisfy the following criteria to be deemed eligible for funding under the Butchery Innovation Grant program:

- Be a state-inspected small-scale meat processing business, a federally inspected small-scale meat processing business, a licensed custom locker or a mobile slaughter unit incorporated or authorized to do business in Iowa.
- Be in good standing with the State of Iowa.
- The business must not be currently in bankruptcy.
- Have a current license from the Iowa Department of Agriculture and Land Stewardship (IDALS) or are actively working with IDALS to obtain a license (per IDALS/Meat & Poultry Inspection Service, Iowa Code Section 189A).
- Business must not have been subject to any regulatory enforcement action related to federal, state, or local environmental, worker safety, food processing, food safety laws, rules, or regulations with the last five years (per Iowa Code Section 15E.370(4) “b,”).
- Must only employ individuals legally authorized to work in Iowa.
- Not be an IDALS employee or immediate family member of an IDALS employee.
- Applicant must be able to provide a one-to-one (1:1) financial match for the grant. In-kind contributions are not eligible.
- Membership in Choose Iowa brand program is NOT required but encouraged.
- Business must employ less than 75 full-time nonseasonal individuals.

Eligible Projects

Projects must accomplish at least one of the following:

- Create or expand meat processing opportunities.
- Provide greater flexibility or convenience in processing for local, small-scale meat processing facilities.

Projects must:

- Not be in progress until a grant application is submitted.
- Be purchased in 7 months or less.
- Be conducted in Iowa.

Examples of eligible projects include:

- Purchase of equipment used in the processing or storage of meat products, such as:
 - Refrigerators or freezers
 - Meat processing equipment
 - Packaging equipment
- Shipping and Sales Tax

Ineligible Expenses

- Expenses incurred prior to grant application submission.
- Any costs incurred by any firm for work performed prior to the formal execution of a contract.
- Administrative or overhead costs not directly related to the grant project.
- Installation costs, including construction, site prep, electrical and plumbing.
- Cost of doing business such as inventory, license fees, working capital, etc.
- Costs associated with advertising, public relations, entertainment.
- Employee wages and benefits.
- Equipment not related to the project for general use.
- Paying off existing debt, related collection costs, mortgage, loans or legal fees.
- Paying off existing fines, penalties or settlements for failure to comply with laws or regulations.
- Real estate purchases.
- Rent or contract payments for time periods extending beyond the term of the grant contract.
- Costs that support or oppose union organizing.
- Lobbying, fundraising or other political activity.

Application Materials

Applicants must apply for the Choose Iowa Butchery Innovation Equipment Only Grant through the online application portal found at chooseiowa.com. Applicants may submit supporting documents including quotes and estimates to supplement budget details as well as letters of support with their applications.

IDALS may require additional information and/or a site visit to review the proposed project.

Agreements

IDALS will develop and issue an agreement for each funded project. No funding commitment is final until the **contract is signed by the grant recipient and an IDALS representative.**

Grant agreements must be signed and returned to Choose Iowa within 30 days of receipt. Failure to submit an executed copy of the agreement within 30 days of receipt may result in the loss of awarded grant funds, unless the delay is approved by IDALS.

Payments

This is a reimbursement grant. Consult your legal or financial advisor regarding financial or tax considerations for any funds received.

To receive reimbursement, grantees must provide assurance the work has been completed, including submitting receipts and invoices and clearly outline expenditures. Only eligible expenses identified in the project budget as budget line items shall be eligible for reimbursement. Choose Iowa will only reimburse eligible expenses up to the actual costs and not to exceed the costs included on the budget, without the prior written consent of Choose Iowa/IDALS. Project costs shall not be changed, modified, or reallocated between budget line items without the prior written consent of the Choose Iowa/IDALS.

Reporting Requirements

A summary and photos of the completed project, including a detailed update to the project outcomes is required when submitting the final reimbursement request.

Applicants who do not submit reports on time, and/or submit incomplete reports, may be required to return all previously disbursed funds to Choose Iowa/IDALS and/or may be removed from future funding opportunities.

Record Requirement

Grant recipients will be responsible for setting up and maintaining a project file that contains all records of correspondence with Choose Iowa/IDALS, receipts, invoices, and copies of all reports and documents associated with the project. Recipients shall retain all data and other records relating to the acquisition and performance of the Grant Award Agreement for a period of three years after the completion of the contract. All records shall be subject to inspection and audit by state personnel at reasonable times. Upon request, the grantee shall produce a legible copy of any or all such records.

Scoring Criteria

Choose Iowa Butchery Innovation Grants are competitive and will be scored according to the following criteria:

SCORING CRITERIA	MAXIMUM SCORE
Addresses one or more goals of the Choose Iowa Butchery Innovation Grant: - Create or expand opportunities for local small-scale farmers to market processed meat under private labels. - Provide great flexibility or convenience for local small-scale farmers to have animals processed. - Projects that are likely to negatively impact on existing meat processing businesses will receive fewer points. The committee may also consider the extent of any likely negative impact.	20 points
Impact on Iowa agriculture - Plan to increase sales of Iowa agricultural products is achievable. - Amount of Iowa agricultural products to be increased is realistic. - Increase in business is appropriate for the size of the grant request. - Project has the potential to impact many farmers. - Project has both short-term and long-term impact, including jobs and investments in Iowa.	20 points
Business readiness, financial sustainability and experience - Applicant demonstrates sound business management, financial aptitude and stability. - Applicant describes the financial benefit of doing the grant project. - Applicant demonstrates a need for grant funding.	15 points
Detailed budget and match - Budget clearly details all project costs. - Budget clearly explains source and amount of applicant's funds for private match. - Budget is cost effective and planned purchases are backed by quotes or other sources. - Total project budget is more than double the grant funding request.	15 points
Work plan and timeline - Work plan is thorough and realistic. - A detailed description of each step of the project is provided with estimated dates. - Project can successfully be completed in 7 months or less and is not already in progress. - Completeness of application information and sufficiency of detail used to describe the project.	10 points
Measurable objectives - Describes how the project will achieve objectives of the grant program to benefit the business and agriculture community. - Objectives of project are measurable and clearly stated.	20 points

SCORING CRITERIA	MAXIMUM SCORE
TOTAL	100 POINTS
BONUS POINTS for CHOOSE IOWA MEMBERS + Up to three additional bonus points may be added to application scores submitted by members of the Choose Iowa Brand Program.	3 points

Contact Information

Amy Gamble – Grants & Education Specialist
 Choose Iowa, Iowa Department of Agriculture and Land Stewardship

Hoover State Office Building
 1305 E. Walnut St.
 Des Moines, IA 50319

(515) 444-9011

Amy.Gamble@IowaAgriculture.gov or ChooselowaGrant@IowaAgriculture.gov

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Appendix

List of questions in the grant application

1. Title (such as Mr., Ms., Dr., etc.)
2. Contact first name
3. Contact last name
4. Contact position title
5. Contact email address
6. Contact phone number
7. Business or individual applicant name
8. Please list your USDA or State of Iowa Establishment Number. If your establishment has multiple, e.g. both a M and a P number, then list the primary.
9. Business Address
10. County
11. Grant amount request
12. Number of employees
13. Have you applied for a Choose Iowa grant previously?
14. If yes, when?
15. Describe your business, its history, and how it interacts with Iowa farmers and agriculture (worth up to 15 points).
16. Describe your project in detail and how the project addresses the goals for the Choose Iowa Butchery Innovation Grant (worth up to 20 points).
17. Describe how this project will impact Iowa Agriculture and increase the sales of Iowa agricultural products (worth up to 20 points).
18. Describe the budget for the project and how you plan to finance the private match requirement (worth up to 15 points).
19. Upload a budget worksheet (using the template provided by Choose Iowa). Budget worksheet must be submitted in .xlsx or .xls file format. If you do not have Microsoft Excel, you may use an alternate free spreadsheet program such as Google sheets, then save in .xlsx or .xls file format.
20. Describe in detail a timeline for which you plan to complete the project (worth up to 10 points).
21. Describe the outcomes that will be measured to evaluate the success of the project (worth up to 20 points).
22. Will the project be completed if grant assistance is not awarded?
23. Which local media (digital and traditional) should be notified should you receive grant funding?
24. Upload supporting documents such as quotes estimates or letters of support. (optional but encouraged)