

Community Project Startup Grants for New Businesses in Eastern Montana

This grant opportunity, made possible with \$50,000 originated by the 1999 Montana Legislature and renewed by the 2001 Montana Legislature, funds projects located within the 16 eastern Montana counties that make up the Eastern Plains RC&D Area. Grants can be used for expenses associated with organizing the project; staff to conduct the day-to-day business of project development; or consultants to do preliminary technical work and discuss possibilities with the public, assemble information and develop a proposal for feasibility and marketing study funding. Grants are limited to a maximum of \$5,000 per project and require a one-to-one match.

In 2000, the projects funded were:

1. Startup activities for a dairy
2. A wool packaging business
3. A hormone-free boxed beef coop
4. An aquaculture/hydroponics business
5. Research of identity preserved, non-GMO wheat production under sprinkler irrigation
6. Research of low-saturate, oleic safflower for commercial production
7. Marketing and promoting edible oils produced in southeastern Montana
8. Chicken and egg production
9. Livestock manure utilization
10. Guest ranch web site development
11. Rural water system project
12. Business recruitment of a Minneapolis-based information technology firm considering expansion in northeastern Montana
13. A gun safety invention
14. Potato research
15. Truck garden
16. Nursing home clothing manufacturing
17. Feasibility for a vertically integrated feedlot, ethanol plant and packing plant

In 2001, the projects funded were:

1. Development of a railroad safety system for collisions
2. Development of new flavors and marketing of granola made in eastern Montana
3. Startup costs of a specialty butcher shop
4. Harvesting, processing, shipping and marketing a commercial onion feasibility study
5. Bale turner invention marketing
6. Wool processing plant feasibility study
7. Small brewery research
8. Indian rice grass marketing
9. Montana-made products marketing
10. Commercial wine production research

In 2002, the projects funded were:

1. Develop a community-owned clothing store
2. Dinosaur fossil molding and casting business
3. Marketing of a portable lifting tool invention
4. Wind energy project engineering study
5. Northeast Montana call center feasibility study
6. Specialty wool design production and marketing

In 2000, the Eastern Plains RC&D developed grant applications, agreements, guidelines, and a rating system. Grant application and guidelines were sent out to all counties. In 2000, we received 37 applications requesting \$164,578. Seventeen applications were funded for \$48,000. In 2001, 16 applications were received requesting \$77,567. Ten applications were funded for \$21,500. In 2002, we received 14 applications requesting \$59,976 and 6 applications were funded for \$19,050.

The coordinator helped applicants with their grant applications by reviewing them and making suggestions for improvements. The RC&D receives \$1,000 yearly to administer this project. The RC&D executive board meets to discuss, rank, and select the best projects twice a year.

Funding for these grants is provided by the Montana Legislature from the Montana Coal Tax Trust Fund and is administered through the Department of Natural Resources and Conservation.