

FOOD VENTURES PROGRAM

2023-28

Program Guidelines

APRIL 1, 2024 TO MARCH 31, 2025

This is a five-year program and changes may be made from year to year. These are the program guidelines for the 2024-25 fiscal year.

PROGRAM OBJECTIVES

This program will provide support for specialized product development, and quality and food safety services provided by Perennia to Nova Scotia farms and food and beverage processors with the following objectives:

- supporting Nova Scotia food and beverage businesses in getting products to market
- enhancing the overall understanding and skills of applicants in product development and improvement, and food safety regulations and planning to grow their business
- encouraging access to new markets through the development and implementation of recognized food safety plans and information sharing initiatives
- encouraging the use of Nova Scotia primary agricultural products as ingredients in new local product development initiatives

PROGRAM COMPONENTS

FOOD VENTURES HAS TWO COMPONENTS:

- Technical Support, Resources and Training
- Cost-Shared Funding for Perennia Services

COMPONENT 1: TECHNICAL SUPPORT, RESOURCES AND TRAINING

As part of the program, Perennia Quality and Food Safety, and Product Development specialists are available to answer technical questions and inquiries. These can be initiated through the following:

- innovation@perennia.ca (for Food and Beverage and NFTs)
- safefoods@perennia.ca (for Product Reviews, Regulatory and Monitoring programs)
- foodsafety@perennia.ca (for Quality and Food Safety Program Development - Coaching and Assessments)

In some cases, where a product's food safety is a high risk and needs to be addressed quickly, some of those costs can be covered without an application. These decisions are made solely at the discretion of Perennia.

If during a technical consultation, it is determined more work is required, the specialist will direct you to the relevant cost-shared funding components below or advise that it is a consulting service and you can decide whether you would like a quote.

In addition to technical consultation, Perennia specialists also develop resources and training. The best way to access these is through perennia.ca/foodventures.

COMPONENT 2: COST-SHARED FUNDING

The second component is cost-shared funding. This provides funding for applicants to access consultation services provided by Perennia Quality and Food Safety and Product Development specialists. To initiate these projects, please submit an application as described below under Application Process.

This component has six categories. Some categories have specific eligibility requirements. Note that activities not listed in the categories below are not eligible for funding.

GENERAL ELIGIBILITY REQUIREMENTS:

Category 1: Established Farms Food and Beverage Business

Eligible applicants in this category can receive 50% funding of eligible expenses up to a maximum total of \$20,000 of funding per applicant per program year over all cost-shared categories

For Food and Beverage Businesses:

- applicant is at least 19 years of age;
- represents identifiable Nova Scotia agriculture and agri-food products;
- generates an annual eligible gross business income of \$15,000 or more for the food or beverage business for which funding is being sought. The eligible business income will be based on the most recent Statement of Business Activities (T2125B or Schedule 125 - Non-Farming revenue: detailing sales by GIF1 revenue code).

For Farms:

- applicant is at least 19 years of age and actively farming in the program year;
- currently and properly registered in the correct income category under the Farm Registration Act; and
- generates an annual eligible gross commodity income of \$15,000. The eligible commodity income will be based on the most recent Statement of Farming Activities (T2042, T1273 or Schedule 125 - Farm Revenue: detailing sales by commodity revenue code).

Category 2: New Farms and Food and Beverage Businesses

Eligible applicants in this category can receive 50% funding of eligible expenses up to a maximum total of \$2,000 of funding per applicant per program year for Nutrition Facts Table Development, Food Safety Product Testing and Reviews, and basic food safety consultation and training

- Applicant must be at least 19 year of age;
- represents identifiable Nova Scotia agriculture and agri-food products; and
- generates annual gross commodity income of \$1,500 to \$14,999.99. The eligible business income will be based on the most recent Statement of Business Activities (T2125B or Schedule 125 - Non-Farming revenue: detailing sales by GIFI revenue code).

QUALITY AND FOOD SAFETY FUNDING CATEGORIES

QUALITY AND FOOD SAFETY PROGRAM DEVELOPMENT OR REVISIONS – COACHING AND ASSESSMENTS

Funding is available for the following services:

- Gap/Needs/Pre-Audit/Pre-Assessments and/or Internal Audit on a business's current food safety and quality management system(s) against specific regulatory, retail or quality and food safety program requirements, in preparation for an audit to meet these specific requirements
- Assistance and coaching with the development and/or implementation of a quality and food safety program (e.g., Pre-requisite Programs (Preventive Controls), HACCP/Preventive Control Plan, Validation, Risk Assessment, Corrective Actions) for:
 - » Regulatory requirements (CFIA, Provincial Regulations)
 - » Retailer (e.g., Costco, Walmart)
 - » Customer requirements (e.g., Sysco, GFS)
 - » Internationally recognized Global Food Safety Initiative programs (e.g., BRCGS, CanadaGAP, GlobalGAP, SQF, PrimusGFS)

FOOD SAFETY PRODUCT TESTING AND REVIEWS

Food safety product testing is targeted at products considered high-risk for food safety hazards or identified by regulatory agency inspectors for follow-up to validate safety for human consumption.

Please note that priority will be given to those products deemed high-risk.

Product reviews are often:

- recommended by a food safety specialist or inspector
- due to a product recall or market withdrawal
- due to concerns about food borne illness (e.g., Listeria monocytogenes)
- required to enter public markets in Nova Scotia

ENVIRONMENTAL MONITORING OF A PROCESSING SPACE/FOOD FACILITY

Funding is available for the following services:

- Specialist time and expenses to assess pathogen risks at your processing facility
- Specialist time and expenses to evaluate facilities, identify risk locations and complete the swabbing
- Specialist time and expenses to conduct swabbing and/or sampling based on Health Canada guidelines (routine swabbing required by Health Canada guidelines is excluded)
- Routine swabbing required by Health Canada guidelines is not eligible

FOOD AND BEVERAGE PRODUCT AND LABELLING FUNDING CATEGORIES

Focuses on applicants with at least one product currently in market who are seeking to improve their product offerings and marketing efforts. Applicants must demonstrate growth potential and proven ability to successfully complete projects.

NUTRITION FACTS TABLE DEVELOPMENT

For new products or products entering a new market, each applicant is eligible for up to 5 Nutrition Facts Tables per program year. Standard adjustments to NFTs resulting from regulatory, packaging changes and ingredient changes are not eligible for funding.

IMPROVING A CURRENT FOOD OR BEVERAGE PRODUCT

This category is for addressing issues with current products to allow them to enter new markets and increase sales.

Note that the amount of funding you can receive for this category is dependent on how much your food or beverage business spends annually on Nova Scotia agricultural ingredients.

Funding is available for the following services:

- Adjusting formulation to achieve a better or different product
- Determining and/or extending the product's shelf-life including packaging considerations to optimize the best before date
- Analytical testing as required
- Analytical testing to provide evidence that a product and/or process has met expectations
- Developing step-by-step production methods
- Label reviews to meet food regulations

CREATING A NEW FOOD OR BEVERAGE PRODUCT

This category is for applicants who demonstrate a proven ability to successfully take a new product to market.

Note that the amount of funding you can receive for this category is dependent on how much your food or beverage business spends annually on Nova Scotia agricultural ingredients.

Funding is available for the following services:

- Product development
- Evaluate product best before date
- Sourcing ingredients and co-packers
- Formula adjustments
- Optimizing product shelf-life
- Production guidance and support
- Support for scale up and packaging
- Label reviews to meet food regulations

INELIGIBLE EXPENSES

These include but are not limited to:

- administrative costs and general overhead;
- buildings and building modifications;
- equipment purchase or rental;
- HST;
- in-kind contributions;
- operating expenses and existing staff salaries;
- services provided by non-Perennia consultants;
- tools;
- travel; and
- implementation of action items from the approved plans are not eligible for assistance (see example below).

Example: A Food Safety Plan may identify areas and/or items in a facility that require attention, such as hands-free hand washing units and proper floor surfacing for a provincially-inspected facility. The program will not cover the cost to purchase and install these items.

APPLICATION PROCESS

Complete the online application form available at perennia.ca/foodventures. Perennia specialists will review your proposed project and provide a recommendation and estimated cost range, which you can approve or decline in our online portal. Note that this recommendation is not a quote.

If you are not able to use the online portal, a downloadable version of the application form is available at perennia.ca/foodventures, which you can email to foodventures@perennia.ca, and the recommendation will be sent to you by email.

If you approve the recommendation, your application will be adjudicated by a review committee consisting of Perennia and Nova Scotia Department of Agriculture staff.

A Perennia specialist may reach out to you at any step of the application process to seek further information for clarification of your needs and goals.

The review committee will be convened often to ensure applications are processed in a timely fashion. All applicants will always receive prompt communication during the process, including the committee's decision on their application. While Perennia will reach out to applicants with an incomplete application, it is the applicant's responsibility to ensure the information is complete when submitted.

Complete applications are adjudicated based on the date of receipt of a completed application. Once funding is expended, the program may close early for that fiscal year.

If an application is complete, reviewed and approved, all successful applicants will receive a letter of approval that identifies the eligible project activities, program funding offered, and the terms and conditions under which program funding is approved. All applicants will be notified of the committee's decision related to their application.

If approved, a Perennia specialist will reach out to further define the work required and generate a quote for your approval. Once the quote is signed and the appropriate down-payment is received, work can begin.

Application Intake Deadline	Activity Period
November 30, 2024	April 1, 2024 - March 15, 2025

Note that program funds are limited and the application intake period may be closed early if funds are expended.

ARM'S LENGTH TRANSACTIONS

Program funding will only be offered on transactions (invoices) that involve a supplier/service provider with an arm's-length relationship to the applicant for approved projects. Arm's length is defined as individuals who are NOT connected by blood relationship, marriage, common-law partnership, or adoption.

AUTHORITY

The review committee shall have the authority to deny an application if there is evidence of misrepresentation of pertinent information. The submission of an application creates no obligation on the part of Perennia to provide funding for the proposed project.

EVALUATION AND AUDIT

Applicants will be asked to complete an evaluation and impact survey related to their work funded under this program.

Review and evaluation of projects may be carried out by Perennia, the Nova Scotia Department of Agriculture (as a funder) and/or Government of Canada (as a funder) or other parties chosen for the purpose of audit, analysis, evaluation, program development and determining assistance. This review and evaluation process may be conducted prior to project commencement, during work or upon project completion.

CONFIDENTIALITY

Applicants consent to the release of their name and the amount of support received under the Program. This specific information is deemed to be public information. Perennia may provide any information from an applicant to another public body or a law-enforcement agency in Canada to assist in an investigation, undertaken with a view to a law-enforcement proceeding or from which a law-enforcement proceeding is likely to result. Any other information provided, unless disclosed in the manner and for the purposes stated above, will be subject to the confidentiality and disclosure provisions of the Freedom of Information and Protection of Privacy Act.

CONTACT INFORMATION

Email: foodventures@perennia.ca