



## Sources of Grants & Loans for Rural Grocery Stores

Updated May 23, 2025

*Disclaimer: This list is not all inclusive and is a continual work in progress.*

### **Federal Programs**

[Healthy Food Financing Initiative Food Access and Retail Expansion \(HFFI FARE Fund\)](#) -- up to \$250,000 for implementation and up to \$100,000 for early-stage planning, predevelopment, and technical assistance. Funding inquiries for round 3 are due Aug. 4, 2025.

[Business & Industry Loan Guarantee Program](#) – financial institution applies to guarantee the loan (up to 80% depending on the size of the loan).

[Rural Energy for America Program \(REAP\)](#) – *USDA paused applications under the Inflation Reduction Act funding (grants up to 50%) on Dec. 31, 2024. Applications for Farm Bill funding (grants for 25% or less of total eligible project costs) were accepted through March 31, 2025. Anticipating a potential July 1 re-opening.* Loan and grant program for agriculture producers and small businesses for renewable energy systems or to make energy efficiency improvements. Area REAP grant writers and project managers providing free services:

- Realizing Rural, ph. 605-295-3688
- Lake Agassiz Development Group, 701-235-1197

[USDA Rural Economic Development Loan and Grant Program \(REDLG\)](#) – Requires resolution of support from rural electric or broadband co-op serving area. NDAREC rural development staff can assist with a loan application for up to \$1 million, maximum 80% of project, 0% interest. See other evaluation criteria.

[North Central Regional Food Business Center “Business Builder” Grants](#) – *Applications for 2025 are indefinitely postponed due to federal funding uncertainty. Stay tuned.* Up to \$50,000 toward small to mid-sized food value chain businesses and funding of local food aggregation and distribution, technology advancements and activities including feasibility studies, market assessments, and succession planning.

[Rural Business Development Grant \(RBDG\)](#) – *The deadline for 2025 applications was Feb. 28.* Eligible applicants include non-profits and government entities, for buildings and equipment that are in turn leased to the business. Other uses include marketing assistance and feasibility studies. North Dakota allocation limited to about \$125,000 annually.

### **North Dakota Programs**

[Rural Development Finance Corporation](#) (supported by rural electric and broadband co-ops)

- Participation Loans – Subject to funding availability, up to 50% of total loan, 2% interest, 1% origination fee
- Interest Buydown – Up to 50% of local share toward a Bank of North Dakota Flex PACE interest buydown, reducing total interest rate by up to 5 percentage points.
- N.D. Food Impact Fund – Supporting start-up and expanding meat processing projects meeting USDA standards or licensed as custom exempt. Revolved funds may be used for other projects in the mid-tier of the food supply chain (not retail). Loans generally structured as a participation with a lead lender of the borrower's choice, up to 80% of project funding, 2% interest, 1% origination fee. Made possible through the USDA Meat & Poultry Intermediary Lending Program.

[Rural Electric & Broadband Cooperatives](#) – Many have revolving loan funds to assist with economic development projects. Check with the cooperative utility providers in your area.

(more)

Rural Grocery Store Sustainability Grant Program – Made possible with passage of Senate Bill 2228 in the 2025 Legislative Session, the N.D. Commerce Department is working on application details. An online informational webinar is planned for May 28 at 1 p.m. CT. Register at this [link](#).

### **Other Programs (not unique to grocery stores)**

CoBank Rural Impact Equity Grant – Start-up grant for co-ops having positive impacts on food system or rural America, up to \$50,000 with a 1:1 equity match, in first five years of operation. Applicants must be sponsored by and applications submitted through a rural Cooperative Development Center such as the NDAREC. Applications due by Aug. 1 annually.

Rural Catalyst Committee & Grant program – Made possible with passage of Senate Bill 2390 in the 2025 Legislative Session, the N.D. Commerce Department is working on application details. Among eligible uses is preserving or reopening rural grocery stores in rural communities with a population of 4,500 or fewer people. Stay tuned for details.

State Energy Program - Funds available to applicants for a variety of energy efficiency related activities including building audits, lighting retrofits, HVAC upgrades, etc. This could work for store buildings owned by a political subdivision such as a city or county, or public economic development organization, or non-profit. Awards range from \$5,000 to \$50,000.

ND Development Fund - Loans and equity with an interest rate subject to risk of project. Non-primary sector projects are now eligible per action from the 2025 Legislative Assembly.

Dakota Business Lending – programs include SBA504.

Regional Councils – Many of the 8 regional councils in the state have revolving loan funds and staff knowledgeable about other sources of loans and grants.

County & Community Job Development Authorities & Economic Development Organizations – check with your county or city auditor on what you have in your area.

*Additional resources welcomed.*