

The Agricultural Cost Reimbursement (ACRE) Program

About the Program

This Agricultural Cost Reimbursement (ACRE) program was created through a partnership between the Montgomery County Office of Agriculture (OAG) and the Maryland Agricultural and Resource-Based Industry Development Corporation (MARBIDCO) through MARBIDCO's Local Government Agriculture & Resource-Based Industry Project Cost Share Program.

ACRE was established to provide cost-share assistance to qualified Montgomery County-based agricultural entrepreneurs for business projects essential to the improvement or expansion of their agricultural enterprises. MARBIDCO and OAG contribute up to half of the total project cost, not to exceed \$6,000. For projects totaling more than \$20,000, an additional \$1,000 in funding from ACRE may be available.

New and existing agricultural enterprises are eligible to apply for ACRE funding. This includes, but is not limited to: table crop farmers, vineyards, commodity farmers, vertical farmers, horticulture businesses, and other non-traditional types of agriculture.

Funding Structure

An agricultural enterprise may apply for ACRE funds to help defray the costs of infrastructure projects. The ACRE program will match MARBIDCO funds, up to \$3,000 per project, as long as the applicant invests at least half of the total project cost.

Examples:

- Farmer Brown wants to install a deer fence for \$25,000. MARBIDCO has agreed to pay \$3,000. The ACRE program will pay \$3,000, and Farmer Brown will pay \$19,000.
- Suzy's Sunflowers LLC wants to install an irrigation system for \$7,500. MARBIDCO has agreed to pay \$1,875, ACRE will pay \$1,875, and Suzy will pay \$3,750.

Agricultural operations may receive multiple ACRE grant awards for multiple projects, up to a total lifetime limit of \$15,000 per company (MARBIDCO Funding).

A single agricultural enterprise may apply to this program up to twice per fiscal year. If more than one application is submitted in a single fiscal year, it must be for different projects.

Eligibility Requirements

- The applicant must be registered as a business and in good standing with the MD Department of Assessment and Taxation.
- The agricultural enterprise making an application must be headquartered in Montgomery County.
- The project being cost-shared must enhance the overall agricultural economy by contributing to the startup or expansion of an agricultural enterprise in Montgomery County; or be associated with an infrastructure improvement or purchase of equipment that will enable future revenue and/or employment growth of the enterprise.

Application Process

Step 1: Interested agricultural enterprises submit an application to the Office of Agriculture providing the following information: project details (applicant contact information, project description, project type, total project cost, estimated employment data related to the project, and a formal written estimate of the total project cost).

Step 2: The application is reviewed by the OAG. The Office of Agriculture has the sole discretion to accept or deny the application request based upon a variety of factors, including, but not limited to:

- Property characteristics (for example, restrictive covenants/easements, property size, assessment, regulatory suitability/compliance of the property, etc.)
- Potential for agricultural economic development meeting the intent of the program

If the project appears to fit within MARBIDCO's statutorily established economic development profile and project criteria, then the OAG will submit the application along with a cover letter requesting consideration by MARBIDCO.

Step 3: If the application/project is approved by the MARBIDCO Review Committee,

- a. The applicant will be notified by OAG and may begin their project.
- b. OAG and MARBIDCO will enter into an agreement whereby each agrees to provide cost-shared grant funding for the specified project.

Step 4: Upon project completion, the applicant will notify the OAG and provide a paid receipt(s) showing that the total project cost has been paid in full. The agreed-upon grant amount will be reimbursed to the applicant by the OAG.

The ACRE funding application is located on our website ([link](#)).

Project Reporting

The OAG administers the ACRE funds and tracks the results of its grant investments.

ACRE award recipients will be asked to provide certain types of information related to the outcomes of this grant. All data requests will be thoroughly discussed with the applicant before any award is made. Examples of requested data include increased revenue amounts that result from the grant-funded project, the number of additional FT/PT employees, etc.

At the conclusion of each fiscal year, the OAG will consolidate and report its ACRE data to the MARBIDCO Board, the County Executive, the County Council, and the State to inform public policies and programs that can better support the local agricultural industry's needs.

Important Notes:

ACRE funding is a reimbursement program that requires the awardee to provide original receipts (proof of payment) as a condition of receiving ACRE funds.

Applications must be approved by both OAG and MARBIDCO.

This program is dependent upon funds available and appropriated by the Montgomery County Council and may be discontinued at any time due to lack of funding. MARBIDCO may also have limitations on its funding availability.

This program is specifically for agricultural businesses; therefore, the business must be registered with the State of Maryland and must be in "good standing" with the State. If operating as a sole proprietor and not registered with the State of Maryland, the farmer must provide a copy of their Schedule F (Form 1040), the official IRS form used by sole proprietors to report farm income and expenses, as proof of operating a legitimate agricultural business.

Any questions about this program may be directed to Jacqueline Arnold at Jacqueline.arnold@montgomerycountymd.gov.