



Farmers Market Promotion Program 2021 Grant Award

USDA Agriculture Marketing Service

Thank You!

Everyone who helped pull together the grant application:

- Grant committee members: Meghan McKenna, Lindsay Slevin, Jessica Gigot, Julia Powers.
- Patrick Bleck
- John Haugen, Carey Hunter, Kallijah Paraska
- Steve Jones, Janee' Muha
- Sera Hartman / Northwest Agriculture Business Center

All of our match partners and in-kind donors:

- Marc Bates / Bates Consulting
- Dave Bain / Cheese and Meat Festival
- Dairy Farmers of Washington
- DPI Specialty Foods
- Genuine Skagit Valley
- Tilth Alliance
- Washington State University Creamery

Farmers Market Promotion Program

“Funds projects that develop, coordinate and expand direct producer-to-consumer markets to help increase access to and availability of locally and regionally produced agricultural products by developing, coordinating, expanding, and providing outreach, training, and technical assistance to domestic farmers markets, roadside stands, community-supported agriculture programs, agritourism activities, online sales or other direct producer-to-consumer (including direct producer-to-retail, direct producer-to-restaurant and direct producer-to-institutional marketing) market opportunities.”

<https://www.ams.usda.gov/services/grants/fmpp>

Timeline for Our Application

- May 20, 2021 – FMPP application goes live with June 21 deadline.
- May-June – Grant committee scrambles to write up the application and solicit in-kind donors and match partners. (The grant required a 25% match of the requested amount in cash or in-kind funds.)
- June 20, 2021 – Application submitted to USDA AMS. AMS says awardees would be notified in “September or October.”
- September 30, 2021 - AMS requests clarifications and edits to our proposal with October 6 deadline.
- October 27, 2021 – We receive Notice of Award!!! (But must keep it confidential until USDA formal announcement “later this fall.”)
- November 29, 2021 – We learn USDA announced the award in a press release on November 23.
- December 7, 2021 – WASCA formally announces award to members.

2021 USDA Grant Awardees

- Farmers Market Promotion Program and Local Food Promotion Program (FMLFPP) awarded \$75.4 million to 172 projects across 41 states.
- FMPP awarded \$37.5 million to 84 projects.
- WASCA's is the only dairy-focused project among all FMPP awardees.
- There are three cheese and dairy projects across the entire FMLFPP system for the 2021 award year: WASCA, Maine Organic Milk Company, and M3 Coop Feasibility LLC of Maryland (the latter two received LFPP awards).
- LFPP awards fund projects that develop, improve, and expand local and regional food business supply chain activities, including processing, distribution, aggregation, and storage of local/regional foods.

How Much is Our Award?

- Three years of funding (September 30, 2021 through September 30, 2024)
- **Federal grant award funds: \$334,795.49**
 - Matching and in-kind funds: \$138,848.00
- **Total investment in Washington cheese: \$473,643.49**

Project Objectives

- *Objective 1: **Educational opportunities for cheesemakers*** – virtual and in-person trainings to increase food safety knowledge, regulatory understanding, cheesemaking skills, and business know-how.
- *Objective 2: **Dedication of Washington Cheese Month*** by the state legislature – to celebrate the work of our state’s cheesemakers and to increase consumer knowledge of our local cheeses.
- *Objective 3: “**Meet the Cheesemakers**”* events – series of in-person, virtual, and self-guided events taking place throughout the state designed to bring cheesemakers together with their local communities and to forge relationships between cheese lovers and the people who make their food.
- *Objective 4: **Retail marketing campaign*** – concerted effort to encourage local grocers to elevate the local cheeses they stock and increase awareness about those products to their customers. This objective includes both in-store marketing materials and a cheesemonger education program.

What This Grant Project

WILL Do:

- Fund events that encourage Washington creameries and cheesemakers to interact directly with consumers.
- Pay for the development, design and printing of marketing materials for Washington cheesemakers to use at all sales levels (direct-to-consumer, online, distribution, and retail).
- Support educational offerings for cheesemakers' development and training.
- Enable WASCA's executive director to work full-time to accomplish our objectives.
- Create greater awareness of Washington's 53 licensed cheesemakers and the diverse cheeses they craft.

What The Grant Project

Will NOT Do:

- Fund the purchase of any cheese, samples, or other food or alcohol.
- Promote any single brand or entity (including advertising for WASCA or generic "Washington made" or "Washington grown" designations).
- Purchase equipment, land, or buildings.
- Pay for fundraising or financial campaigns.

Breakdown of Initiatives

Objective 1: Cheesemaker Educational Opportunities

- *Bates Consulting*: Offer PCQI Refresher in 2022 and 2023; GMP/Food Safety Refresher in 2022; and Training on FSMA Traceability Rule in 2024.
- *Dairy Farmers of Washington*: annual workshop on Food Safety & Nutrition in 2022, 2023, and 2024.
- *WSU Creamery*: Advanced Cheese Making Short Course in 2022; Basic Plus Cheese Making Short Course in 2023; Pasteurization Workshop in 2022, 2023, and 2024.

Objective 2: Washington Cheese Month

- Solicit support from key players to engage with state legislature.
- Lead discussion of Washington cheesemaking community's importance in our state's agricultural economy and local food system.
- Gain dedication of official Washington Cheese Month (proposed month is June).
- Use inaugural Washington Cheese Month to kick off objectives 3 and 4.

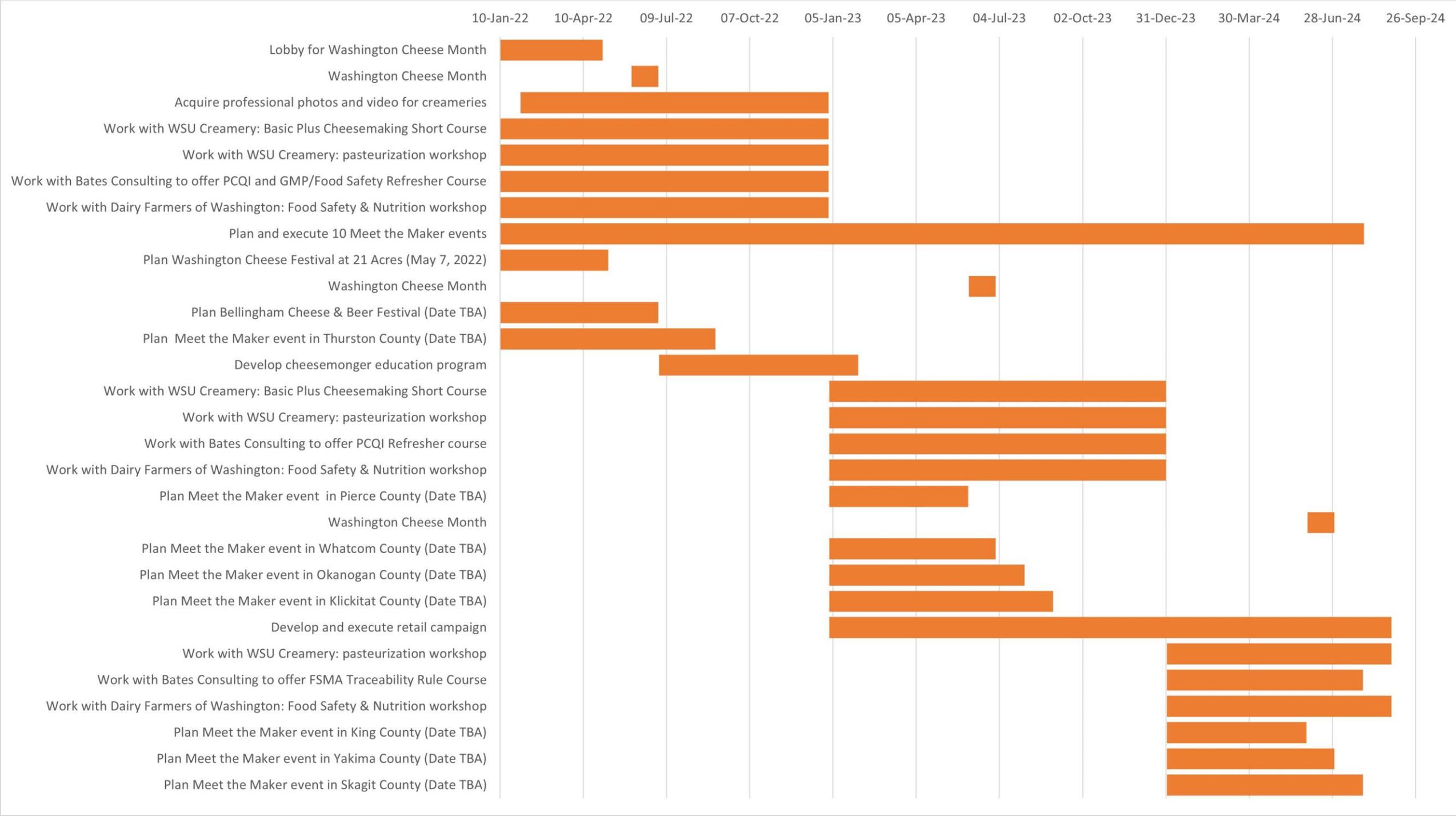
Breakdown of Initiatives

Objective 3: Meet the Cheesemakers Series

- 2 larger festival-style events (Spring Cheese Festival in May and Bellingham Cheese & Beer Festival)
- 8 intimate “Meet the Cheesemakers” market-style events featuring an educational seminar for consumers; one in each county: King, Klickitat, Okanogan, Pierce, Skagit, Thurston, Whatcom, and Yakima.
- “The Hunt” scavenger hunt featuring tourism and local shopping activities in each region of the state (modeled on Vermont Cheese Council’s annual event).
- Passport program featuring coupons and incentives to visit/shop local.
- Creation of professional photos and videos at up to 35 small- and medium creameries.

Objective 4: Retail Marketing Campaign

- Create materials for retail marketing campaign featuring local cheeses sold by regional grocery stores and retailers. This includes the “Choose Washington Cheese” sticker, Washington cheese maps, shelf talkers, and other signage designed to draw attention to Washington cheeses in retail settings.
- Develop cheesemonger education program to support retail promotions. This will include educational videos and workshop, the creation and maintenance of an archive of local cheese information and tasting notes, and in-person trainings.
- Work with at least four retailers to execute a “Choose Washington Cheese” promotion, including education of any on-site cheesemongers working with local cheeses.



Proposed Schedule of “Meet the Cheesemaker” Events & Festivals

- May 2022 – Spring Cheese Festival at 21 Acres in Woodinville
- June 2022 – Bellingham Cheese & Beer Festival
- August 2022 – Thurston County Meet the Cheesemakers

- May 2023 – Pierce County Meet the Cheesemakers
- June 2023 – Whatcom County Meet the Cheesemakers
- September 2023 – Okanogan County Meet the Cheesemakers
- October 2023 – Klickitat County Meet the Cheesemakers

- May 2024 – King County Meet the Cheesemakers
- June 2024 – Yakima County Meet the Cheesemakers
- July 2024 – Skagit County Meet the Cheesemakers

What Does This Mean for...

WASCA Members

The work of this grant project will:

- help promote member creameries and events that will benefit them.
- increase opportunities to interact with and market cheeses directly to consumers.
- pay for Washington Cheese stickers to identify local cheeses wherever they are sold.
- enable WASCA to help in promoting Washington creameries through Meet the Cheesemaker events and cheese-based festivals, retail marketing campaigns for those cheesemakers whose cheeses are available in grocery stores around the region, and the development of marketing materials to help cheesemakers, distributors, retailers, and cheesemongers spread the word about Washington curd.
- arrange for custom photos and videos to be made at small- and medium-sized creameries that they can use in their business' marketing materials.
- allow business and corporate sponsors to engage in consumer-based and industry events.
- provide cheese enthusiasts more occasions to interact with their favorite local creameries and meet new ones—to learn more about the folks who produce Washington-made cheeses!

The Community at Large

The work of this grant project will:

- strengthen cheesemakers' ability to draw repeat sales of safe and healthy product, and sustain growth in the industry.
- increase consumer knowledge of Washington cheeses, which still lags behind knowledge of domestic cheeses made in other regions.
- build relationships between cheesemakers and consumers.
- encourage shoppers to choose local cheeses over domestic commodity or imported cheeses.



Next Steps:

- Survey membership for participation interest for each initiative.
 - Host in-depth discussion of grant initiatives in February.
 - Begin work on all initiatives to be completed in 2022.
- Solicit sponsors and volunteers to make each event a success.



We can't make this
happen without you!

Want to get involved?

Please send a message to WashingtonCheese@gmail.com.

Thank you!

