

Category	Exemplary (9-10 pts)	Strong (7-8 pts)	Developing (4-6 pts)	Limited (0-3 pt)
<b>1. Geographic Area of Impact (10%)</b>	Project clearly defines a substantial regional area of influence (multi-county or multi-state); justification for regional scope is strong and data-supported.	Defines a clear area (county or multicounty) with moderate justification of regional influence.	Limited to one small locality with weak evidence of broader regional benefit.	Narrow or unclear area of impact; lacks rationale for regional relevance.
<b>2. Number of Producers Impacted (10%)</b>	Engages or benefits a large, well-defined group of producers (e.g., >50), with clear mechanisms for participation and measurable outcomes.	Impacts a moderate number (e.g., 20–50) of producers with reasonable engagement strategies.	Small group (e.g., <20) or indirect benefits with unclear engagement.	Very few producers impacted; impact not demonstrated.
<b>3. Number of Processors Impacted (10%)</b>	Multiple processors (>5) are directly involved or benefit through capacity expansion, efficiency, or new product development.	Several processors (2–5) are engaged with clear roles and anticipated benefits.	One processor involved or benefits indirect.	No clear impact on processing facilities.
<b>4. Volume of Milk Impacted (10%)</b>	Quantifies substantial milk volume affected (>10 million lbs annually) with verifiable data and direct linkage to project outcomes.	Moderate milk volume affected (2–10 million lbs annually) with reasonable documentation.	Small or estimated volume (<2 million lbs) with limited data.	Volume unspecified or not supported with data.
<b>5. Types of Dairy Products Impacted (10%)</b>	Broad product diversification (e.g., cheese, yogurt, butter, powder) with innovative market potential and clear processing linkages.	Moderate diversification or improvement of existing product lines.	Limited product focus with minimal innovation.	No clear connection to product development or diversity.
<b>6. Timeline &amp; Feasibility (12-month goal) (10%)</b>	Detailed timeline with achievable milestones; clearly demonstrates completion within 12 months.	Timeline generally feasible; minor risks to completion identified.	Timeline somewhat unrealistic or lacks detail in sequencing.	Unclear or unrealistic timeline.
Category	Exemplary (18-20 pts)	Strong (12-17 pts)	Developing (5-11 pts)	Limited (0-4 pt)
<b>7. Comprehensive Budget (20%)</b>	Budget is detailed, realistic, and well-justified; aligns with objectives and includes matching funds or cost-share components.	Budget is mostly complete and reasonable; clear linkage to outcomes.	Budget presented but lacks clarity, justification, or detail.	Budget unrealistic, incomplete, or disconnected from goals.
<b>8. Overall Cohesiveness &amp; Integration (20%)</b>	Proposal is highly cohesive; goals, methods, outcomes, and evaluation clearly interlinked and logically presented.	Proposal is generally cohesive; most components align with intended impact.	Some inconsistencies between objectives, methods, or outcomes.	Disjointed or poorly organized proposal; unclear connections.