



**USDA Farm to School Grant Program Frequently Asked Questions**

*Updated October 2, 2018*

Please refer to the request for applications (RFA) for more detailed information.

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## GENERAL

**Q: What are the legislative authorities guiding this program?**

A: Section 18 of the Richard B. Russell National School Lunch Act established a Farm to School Program to assist eligible entities, through grants and technical assistance, in implementing farm to school programs that improve access to local foods in eligible schools.

**Q: How is “local” defined for the Farm to School Grant Program?**

A: “Local” is left to each applicant to define. USDA fully expects applicants to have varying definitions of “local” and “regional” as each definition may be specific to individual contexts.

**Q: What is the timeline of the Farm to School Grant Program?**

A: Here are the important dates:

- October 2, 2018: RFA released
- October 16 and 17 2018 at 1:00 PM Eastern Standard Time: RFA webinars – See the [applicant resources](#) for more information
- December 4, 2018: All proposals due via grants.gov (11:59 p.m. Eastern Standard Time)
- Late spring/early summer: Awards announced (pending the availability of Federal funds)

Please be sure to [subscribe](#) to the Office of Community Food Systems’ e-newsletter, “The Dirt,” for updates regarding the FY 2019 Farm to School Request for Applications, including webinar and grant resources.

**Q: What types of grants are offered?**

A: USDA is soliciting applications for three types of grants:

1. Planning grants are intended for school districts or schools, state and local agencies, Indian tribal organizations, small- and medium-sized agricultural producers or groups of small- and medium-sized agricultural producers, and non-profit entities working with schools or school districts just starting to incorporate farm to school program elements into their operations.
2. Implementation grants are intended for school districts or schools, state and local agencies, Indian tribal organizations, small- and medium-sized agricultural producers or groups of small- and medium-sized agricultural producers, and non-profit entities working with schools or school districts to help scale or further develop existing farm to school initiatives.
3. Training grants are intended for state and local agencies, Indian tribal organizations, agricultural producers or groups of agricultural producers, and non-profit entities to support trainings and events intended to strengthen farm to school supply chains or provide technical assistance.

**Q: What percentage of awarded grants will be Planning, Implementation, and Training projects?**

A: We expect to award 50 percent of projects to schools or school districts. Planning grants will represent approximately 15 percent, Implementation 70 percent, and Training grants 15 percent of the total awards. Based on the number, quality, and diversity of applications, the actual percentages of grant awards may be different than those estimated above.

**Q: What are SMART objectives?**

A: SMART is an acronym that stands for specific, measurable, attainable, relevant and time-bound. The objectives, milestones that indicate the project is on track to meet overarching goals, should have these attributes. For more information about SMART objectives, please view minute 15:35 of the [FY 2018 Evaluation and Reporting webinar](#).

**Q: Can I submit an application for more than one type of grant, (Planning, Training, and Implementation) in the same funding cycle?**



A: No. Applicants must choose between submitting a Planning, Training, or Implementation grant.

**Q: How many projects can I lead or participate in?**

A: An eligible applicant can serve as the lead on only one Planning, Implementation, or Training grant application. You may be listed as a key partner on more than one application.

**Q: The RFA indicates we need to travel to one face-to-face meeting. How should we budget for that in our proposal?**

A: The location and duration of the meeting is unknown at this time. The Grantee Gathering is typically 2 full days long. You should estimate a hotel stay of two nights, ground travel to and from the airport, and meal expenses for 2.5 to 3 days for no more than two staff persons. If you intend to send additional staff other than the project director, include expenses and justification for additional staff. As for airfare expenses, we recommend estimating flight costs for a medium-high priced round trip airfare. (For planning purposes, assume you'll travel further than the next state over.) Please note, attending this meeting is not a requirement of the Training grant.

**Q: Can I attach any documentation in addition to what is required by the RFA?**

A: No, there are no optional attachments permitted with the FY 2019 application.

**Q: Can I exceed the word count for each section of the proposal narrative as described in the RFA?**

A: Yes, however your application must comply with the page limit requirements. Applications must not exceed four pages for Training and Planning grants nor six pages for Implementation grants. The suggested word counts are simply recommendations intended to help guide applicants in determining how much content to write for each subsection of the proposal. You may go over or under the suggested word count length as long as you have adequately responded to the proposal narrative questions and stay within the page limits stated in the RFA.

**Q: I stayed under the suggested word count for each section, but my application exceeds the page limit. Will my application still meet the length requirements?**

A: No. The suggested word counts are simply recommendations intended to help guide applicants in determining how much content to write for each subsection of the proposal. You may go over or under the suggested word count length as long as you have adequately responded to the proposal narrative questions and stay within the page limits stated in the RFA. If your application exceeds four pages for a Planning or Training grant, or six pages for an Implementation grant, you will need to edit your application in order to meet the page length requirements.

**Q: Will my application be rejected if it exceeds the page limit?**

A: Applications will not be disqualified because of length; however, any information contained on pages after page 4 (in the case of Planning or Training grants) or page 6 (for Implementation grants) will be discarded and not scored—they will not be considered a part of the application, even if the text is a continuation of information from the previous page. In order to guarantee that all sections of your application are scored, please abide carefully by the page limits listed in the RFA.

## ELIGIBILITY

**Q: Who is eligible to apply?**

A: The following entities are eligible to apply:

- Eligible schools;



- State and local agencies;
- Indian tribal organizations;
- Small- and medium-sized agricultural producers or groups of small- and medium-sized agricultural producers; and,
- Non-profit entities.

**Q: Do agricultural producers have to be a non-profit to be eligible?**

A: No, agricultural producers are not required to have 501(c)(3) status in order to be eligible for a Farm to School Grant. However, agricultural producers must operate a small- to medium-sized farm.

**Q: What is considered to be a small- to medium-sized agricultural producer?**

A small- to medium-sized agricultural producers is any agricultural producer that operates a farm from which up to \$1 million (gross) of agricultural products were produced and sold, or normally would have been sold, during the previous calendar year. Or an agricultural producer that operates a farm with land acreage measuring less than 1,582 acres that produced and sold, or normally would have sold agricultural products.

**Q: If my school district was awarded a Farm to School Grant in FY 2017 or FY 2018, am I, as an individual school, still eligible to apply for a farm to school grant for FY 2019?**

A: No, the individual school is not eligible to apply for the FY 2019 cycle.

**Q: I am a FY 2016 farm to school grantee. Can I apply for a FY 2019 farm to school grant?**

A: FY 2016 farm to school grantees that have completed their grant at the time of application may apply for a FY 2019 farm to school grant. The time of application for this funding opportunity is defined as the RFA close date (December 4, 2018). Grant termination is determined by the date listed in box 21 of the grantee's FNS-529 form. For example, if a FY 2016 grantee's end date is December 31, 2018, this grantee is *ineligible* to apply for a FY 2019 farm to school grant. Former grantees should keep in mind that the Office of Community Food Systems, to the extent practicable, is seeking to award strong proposals that have never received farm to school funding.

**Q: If I am an individual teacher or parent, am I eligible for a Farm to School Grant?**

A: No, individuals may not apply for a Farm to School Grant, however non-profits, eligible schools or school districts, state and local agencies, Indian tribal organizations and agricultural producers may submit an application.

**Q: Am I eligible to apply as an individual school?**

A: Yes, you may apply as an individual school, however please note that USDA will prioritize projects that reach more than one school. Please see section 1.4 of the RFA for additional information.

**Q: What defines an eligible school?**

A: Eligible schools are pre-K-12 School Food Authorities (SFAs), non-profit private schools, charter schools, Indian tribal schools, and others that participate in the National School Lunch or Breakfast Programs.

**Q: I am not an Indian tribal organization but my proposal serves Native communities. Will my application be considered as meeting the Indian tribal organization priority?**

A: The application will be considered as meeting the Indian tribal organization priority if at least 50 percent of the proposal's target population reaches Native communities.



**Q: Can you define non-profit entities?**

A: Non-profit entities are defined as any corporation, trust, association, cooperative, or other organization which: (1) Is operated primarily for scientific, educational, service, charitable, or similar purposes in the public interest; (2) Is not organized primarily for profit; and (3) Uses its net proceeds to maintain, improve, and/or expand its operations. For this purpose, the term “non-profit organization” excludes colleges and universities, hospitals, state, local, and Federally-recognized Indian tribal governments, and those non-profit organizations which are excluded from coverage of this part in accordance with §230.20(c) (2 CFR Part 230.25).

For the purposes of this grant program, non-profit entities must have 501(c)(3) status.

**Q: Through my proposed project, I would like to work with an agricultural producer who does not meet the small- and medium-sized guidance outlined in the RFA. Is this allowable?**

A: Agricultural producers that are key partners of the grant project must also conform to the small- and medium-sized guidance outlined in section 3.0 of the RFA. If they do not, they are ineligible to be a key partner on the project.

**Q: I am a for-profit entity, am I eligible for this grant fund?**

A: No, for-profit entities are ineligible for these grant funds and are also ineligible to be a key partner. The only exception is that small- and medium-sized for-profit agricultural producers **are** eligible for these grant funds. Please see section 3.0 of the RFA for additional information regarding eligibility requirements for agricultural producers.

**Q: Can a University Extension Service Program apply for a grant?**

A: Extension programs located at institutions of higher learning can be a key partner with schools, state and local agencies, Indian tribal organizations, agriculture producers or non-profit organizations. However, they cannot submit an application as the lead applicant.

**Q: My institution of higher learning or extension program is considered a non-profit 501(c)(3); can I apply as a non-profit?**

A: No.

**Q: My institution of higher learning or extension program is considered a state or local agency; can I apply as a state or local agency?**

A: No.

**Q: I am a Tribal College. Am I eligible for a farm to school grant?**

A: No, Indian Tribal Colleges are ineligible for this grant opportunity because they are a higher education institution. It is important to note that a Tribal college can be a key partner.

**Q: Are cooperative extensions eligible?**

A: No. Cooperative extensions are not eligible to be a lead applicant for a Farm to School grant however are permitted to serve as a key partner. For the purposes of this RFA, cooperative extensions are defined a nationwide, non-credit educational network that addresses public needs by providing non-formal higher education and learning activities to farmers, ranchers, communities, youth, and families throughout the nation.

**Q: My hospital foundation is a 501(c)(3) non-profit. Are we eligible to apply as a non-profit entity?**

A: Yes.



**Q: Are hospitals eligible for a farm to school grant?**

A: No, hospitals are not eligible for a farm to school grant as a lead applicant. However, hospitals can be a key partner.

**Q: Are 501(c)(6) organizations eligible for this grant opportunity?**

A: No, however they can be a key partner.

**Q: Are private schools eligible for farm to school funds?**

A: Pre-K-12 non-profit private schools, charter schools, Indian tribal schools, and others that participate in the National School Lunch or Breakfast Programs are eligible to apply.

**Q: We are applying now to participate in the National School Lunch or Breakfast Programs but don't currently participate. Can we still apply for the grant program since we will be participating next year?**

A: No. Part of the application process involves reporting on Free and Reduced Price Meal participation. Without that data, you cannot apply.

**Q: Are state commodity commissions eligible?**

A: Yes. For the purposes of this RFA, state commodity commissions are considered state agencies and therefore are eligible to apply for a Farm to School grant.

**Q: Are schools that are considered a Local Education Agency (LEA) eligible?**

A: Yes. For the purposes of this grant program, an LEA is considered a local agency, and therefore is eligible to apply for a Farm to School grant.

**Q: Are entities located in the American territories eligible?**

A: The U.S. Virgin Islands, Puerto Rico, and Guam are eligible to apply, given their participation in the National School Lunch Act. Entities located in Northern Mariana Islands, American Samoa, and the Freely Associated States (Federated States of Micronesia, Republic of Palau, and Republic of Marshall Islands) are **ineligible** for this funding opportunity because they receive a Nutrition Assistance Program block grant.

**Q: Are institutions of higher learning eligible to apply for a grant?**

A: No, institutions of higher learning cannot submit an application as the lead applicant for Training, Planning, nor Implementation grants. However, institutions of higher learning can partner (i.e. be a key partner) with eligible entities such as schools, state and local agencies, Indian tribal organizations, agricultural producers or non-profit organizations.

**Q: I don't have my non-profit status yet. I've applied and expect to get it soon. Can I still apply as a non-profit?**

A: No, you must be a registered 501(c)(3) organization at the time of application.

**Q: Can a fiscal agent/sponsor apply on my behalf?**

A: Yes, provided the fiscal agent or fiscal sponsor is an eligible entity as defined by authorizing legislative language. Please see section 3.3.1 of the RFA for additional information.

**Q: Are there additional eligibility requirements for Planning, Implementation and Training grants?**

A: In order for your application to be forwarded for review, planning, implementation and training grant applicants must show evidence of existing community support and engagement. Planning and Implementation grant applicants must submit three letters of commitment and training grantees must provide one letter of



support from a prospective training attendee. Please see section 3.1 and 3.2 of the RFA for additional information.

**Q: We have some agricultural and farming activities already in place at our school that we'd like to expand, but we do not call them farm to school, nor have we received farm to school funding before. Are we eligible?**

A: Yes, there is no requirement related to what you call your programs.

**Q: Can we develop a school garden with farm to school grant funds?**

A: Yes. Please refer to the RFA for further information.

**Q: I was a previous Planning grantee. Can I apply this year for implementation funds?**

A: Yes, Planning grantees are welcome to apply. While being a past Planning grant recipient does not guarantee an implementation award, planning grantees that have completed their projects and Action Plans at the time of application are encouraged to apply. The time of application for this funding opportunity is defined as the RFA close date (December 4, 2018). Grant termination is determined by the date listed in box 21 of the grantee's FNS-529 form.

**Q: I was a previous Implementation, Training or Support Service grantee. Can I apply again this year for funds?**

A: Due to the high demand of this funding opportunity and limited funding, Implementation, Training or Support Service grantees that received funding in FY 2018 or FY 2017 are ineligible to apply for FY 2019 funding.

**Q: I'm trying to decide between a Planning grant and an Implementation grant. Which should I apply for?**

A: Planning grants are for those organizations just getting started (or thinking about starting) with farm to school programs. Planning grantees focus on building a farm to school team, creating a farm to school vision and goals, conducting preliminary taste tests and menu audits, exploring local procurement options, planning school gardens, establishing relationships, and getting students, teachers, food service staff, parents, and communities excited about local food and agriculture, and healthy eating. If your organization hasn't already participated in these activities, becoming a Planning grantee is a great way to get the resources and technical assistance needed to design a farm to school program that incorporates best practices from the very start. If organization has already done many of these preliminary activities, then an Implementation grant is probably more appropriate. If you already have farm to school experience but a majority of your proposed project focuses on farm to school work for which you have less experience and engaging in partnership building activities and a long term strategic planning process would be useful, then apply for a planning grant.

**Q: Can I be a fiscal sponsor for an organization and also submit my own farm to school grant proposal in the same RFA cycle?**

A: Yes, fiscal sponsors may submit their own farm to school grant application and serve as a fiscal sponsor within the same RFA cycle; however the two projects must be distinct. If an applicant submits more than one proposal seeking funding for the same project, only one application will be forwarded for panel review.

**Q: I am a former planning grantee. Can I apply for another planning grant?**

A: No, you must apply to another grant track type (training or implementation).

**Q: I am a residential child care institution (RCCI). Am I eligible for a farm to school grant?**

If the RCCI operates the National School Lunch or Breakfast Programs, it is eligible for a farm to school planning or implementation grant.

## PLANNING GRANTS

**Q: What groups are eligible to apply for Planning grants?**

A: Pre-K-12 SFAs, non-profit private schools, charter schools, Indian tribal schools, and others that participate in the National School Lunch or Breakfast Programs are eligible to apply for Planning grants. State and local agencies, Indian tribal organizations, small- and medium-sized agricultural producers or groups of agricultural producers, and non-profit entities are also eligible to apply for a Planning grant.

**Q: What is the expected funding amount for Planning grants?**

A: Planning grants will be a minimum of \$20,000 and shall not exceed \$50,000.

**Q: What is the time period for execution of Planning grants?**

A: All Planning grant activities must be completed in 12 or 24 months. Applicants should expect the grant life cycle to include start up activities, execution, and close out activities (i.e. final financial and program reports, submission of an Action Plan, accounting, etc.).

**Q: If we successfully complete the planning process, will we get an Implementation grant in the next round of funding?**

A: While you will be encouraged to apply for an implementation grant upon successful completion of a Planning grant, there are no guarantees of additional funding.

**Q: If we are selected as planning grantee, do we have to use USDA's planning protocols or can we use our own system?**

A: You will be required to use USDA's planning protocols and templates. You may preview the [Action Plan](#) template available on the [USDA Farm to School Grant Program webpage](#).

**Q: As an SFA, can I apply with other schools in my area?**

A: Yes, in addition to individual submissions, USDA will consider submissions where a USDA investment might impact multiple districts and thus a broader geographic range than any one district might cover. This could take the form of a "multi-district" submission with one lead district that is collaborating with multiple districts to conduct a comprehensive regional or multi-district planning process. In this case, the lead district is the one that submits the proposal.

**Q: How might I find others to partner with?**

A: You might connect with the Farm to School Coordinator in your State Department of Agriculture or Education, or statewide nonprofit partners that coordinate farm to school activities in your state. For a complete list of farm to school coordinators across the country, see our [map](#).

**Q: Are there additional eligibility requirements for Planning grants?**

A: In order for your application to be forwarded for review, planning grant applicants must show evidence of existing community support and engagement. Planning grant applicants must submit three letters of commitment. Please see section 3.1 and 3.2 of the RFA for additional information.

## IMPLEMENTATION GRANTS

**Q: What is the expected funding amount for Implementation grants?**





A: Implementation grant amounts are to be a minimum of \$50,000 and shall not exceed \$100,000.

**Q: What groups are eligible to apply for Implementation grants?**

A: Pre-K-12 SFAs, non-profit private schools, charter schools, Indian tribal schools, and others that participate in the National School Lunch or Breakfast Programs are eligible to receive implementation grants. State and local agencies, Indian tribal organizations, small- and medium-sized agricultural producers or groups of small- and medium-sized agricultural producers, and non-profit entities working with schools or school districts are also eligible to apply for an Implementation grant.

**Q: What is the time period for execution of Implementation grants?**

A: Implementation grants are expected to be completed within 12 or 24 months. Applicants should expect the grant life cycle to include start up activities, execution, and close out activities (final financial and program reports, accounting, etc). Applicants are expected to plan accordingly in order to achieve project deliverables within the grant period specified.

**Q: As an SFA can I apply with other schools in my area?**

A: Yes, in addition to individual submissions, USDA will consider submissions where a USDA investment might impact multiple districts and thus a broader geographic range than any one district might cover. This could take the form of a “multi-district” submission with one lead district that is collaborating with multiple districts to conduct a comprehensive regional or multi-district implementation process. In this case, the lead district is the one that submits the proposal.

**Q: How might I find others to partner with to submit a “multi-district” application?**

A: You might connect with the Farm to School Coordinator in your State Department of Agriculture or Education, or statewide nonprofit partners that coordinate farm to school activities in your state. For a complete list of farm to school coordinators across the country, see our [map](#).

**Q: I am a non-profit applying to an implementation grant. Do I have to have a school or school district partner in order to apply?**

A: No. Applicants are, however, strongly encouraged to include letters of commitment from school partners that participate in the National School Lunch or Breakfast Programs with whom they desire to target with their project’s work. This is intended to ensure school districts are vested partners in and/or ready markets for any farm to school activities funded through the grant request.

**Q: As a non-profit applying to an implementation grant, can my project solely support schools or school districts that do not participate in the National School Lunch or Breakfast Programs or that operate non-school based CACFP/SFSP programming?**

A: No. Farm to school funds are intended to support eligible schools or school districts that participate in the National School Lunch or Breakfast Programs. USDA understands that the implementation of certain farm to school activities (e.g. integration of local foods into meal service) may impact schools that do not operate the National School Lunch or Breakfast Programs. Please note that submitted applications, including estimated reach, should discuss schools and CACFP/SSO/SFSP sites deemed eligible according to the criteria outlined in the RFA. Please see section 3.0 of the RFA for additional information regarding eligibility.

**Q: I am applying to the Planning or Implementation grant, but don’t know specifically with which schools I will be working. How do I fill out the cover sheet?**

A: Under the “School Information” section, please provide a brief explanation of how you plan to partner with schools (e.g. our project will recruit 16 schools to participate in a statewide farm to school network, or, our project will award sub-grants to three large districts in our state). Please be sure to complete boxes 1 through



3 (estimated reach of the project) in the Free/Reduce Price Meals section” on page three of the coversheet. Please make sure that a letter of commitment is secured from at least one of these intended targets.

**Q: I am a non-profit entity. Does my proposal have to include procurement related activities?**

A: In accordance with the overall purpose of the program to improve access to local foods in eligible schools, a strong proposal would address how the proposed project supports or aligns with local procurement efforts in USDA Child Nutrition Programs. See the RFA for the scoring criteria for Implementation grants.

**Q: As a non-profit applying for a Farm to School grant, do I have to have an audited financial statement?**

A: No.

**Q: My non-profit has never been audited; are we eligible to apply as the lead organization?**

A: Grant applicants are not required to have received an audit prior to being selected for a USDA Farm to School Grant. However, under Federal audit requirements, Circular A-133, recipient institutions that expend \$500,000 or more per year in Federal funds must have a single or program-specific audit for that year.

## TRAINING GRANTS

**Q: What groups are eligible to apply for Training grants?**

A: State and local agencies, Indian tribal organizations, agricultural producers or groups of agricultural producers, and non-profit entities are eligible to receive training grant funds. Cooperative Extension programs are NOT eligible. Unlike planning and implementation grants, training grants may support projects that impact CACFP and SFSP operators that have sites beyond schools.

**Q: Are schools/districts eligible for training grants?**

A: No, schools/districts are not eligible for training grants.

**Q: What is the expected funding amount for Training grants?**

A: Training grants will be a minimum of \$20,000 and shall not exceed \$50,000. Trainings should have at least state-level reach. State-level trainings are encouraged to cap their grant funding requests at \$25,000.

**Q: How many Training grants will be awarded?**

A: Depending on number of submissions, we ideally would like to fund at least one national training and seven regional or state trainings in each of the seven FNS regions.

**Q: What is the time period for execution of Training grants?**

A: Training grants will be awarded for a one year grant period, starting from the project start date.

**Q: How do I apply?**

A: Training grant applicants must submit their application on grants.gov. See the RFA for complete instructions.

**Q: Can I partner with or subgrant to another entity to execute my training?**

A: Yes. Partners essential to the proposed project that may require funding from USDA in order to participate can be included in applicant budgets as a subgrantee or line item contractor.

**Q: Will USDA participate in my training?**

A: Training grant recipients are required to make best faith efforts to include USDA FNS Regional Farm to School personnel in the training planning process.

**Q: I have executed a training with USDA in the past. Will I receive special consideration?**

A: No, however, priority consideration will be given to entities that completed USDA Local Foods Procurement Trainings.

**Q: Are CVs or resumes counted towards the four page maximum narrative page limit?**

A: No.

**Q: Does the agenda count towards the four page project narrative?**

A: No.

**Q: What is a USDA local procurement training?**

A: Essentially, any [local procurement trainings](#) conducted by the USDA. These trainings are typically offered at state or national conferences or are coordinated/led by [farm to school staff](#), the Institute of Child Nutrition (ICN) or state agencies. If you are unsure if you have received training from this program, in the narrative, you can describe any USDA or ICN-led local procurement training that your staff has attended.



**Q: My project has training components – should I apply for a training or implementation grant?**

A: If the primary objective of your project is to provide training in the form of a conference or large-scale meeting(s) that reaches a broad range of stakeholders within a state, region (across states) or nationally, then you should submit a proposal for a training grant. If your project contains smaller training components for specific staff members in order to execute on a larger farm to school plan, you may want to consider applying for an implementation grant.

## CHILD AND ADULT CARE AND SUMMER FOOD PROGRAMS

**Q: What is a school-based CACFP program?**

A: For the purposes of this RFA, a school-based CACFP program is defined as operating on-site and in partnership with a pre-K-12 school district that participates in the National School Lunch or Breakfast Programs.

**Q: What is a school-based SFSP/SSO program?**

A: For the purposes of this RFA, a school-based SFSP/SSO program is defined as a school that serves reimbursable meals through NSLP, SFSP, or SSO on-site during the summer months, as opposed to nonprofit organizations, parks and recreation departments, or schools that serve children in sites that are off of school grounds.

**Q: How can I reach non-school based Summer Food Service Program (SFSP)/Seamless Summer Option (SSO) or Child and Adult Care Food Programs (CACFP) with farm to school funds?**

A: For the FY 2019 cycle, non-profits, state or local agencies, Indian tribal organizations and agricultural producers applying for a training grant may target trainings to SFSP, SSO and/or CACFP sponsors that have sites beyond schools.

**Q: Which components of the CACFP programs are eligible for funding?**

A: The after-school meals component of CACFP has always been eligible for support through the USDA Farm to School grants. Projects that serve school-based CACFP pre-K programs are also eligible to apply for a Planning or Implementation grant. Projects that serve non-school based CACFP programs may apply for a Training grant. Please note that schools/districts are not eligible for Training grants. For more information regarding entity eligibility requirements by grant type, please review sections 3.0 to 3.3 of the RFA.

**Q: Which types of summer meals programs are eligible for funding?**

A: Projects that serve children on-site in schools that provide reimbursable meals through NSLP, SFSP, or SSO during the summer months are eligible to apply for a Planning or Implementation grant. Projects that serve non-school based SFSP programs may apply for a Training grant. Please note that schools/districts are not eligible for Training grants. For more information regarding entity eligibility requirements by grant type, please review sections 3.0 to 3.3 of the RFA.

**Q: Our Head Start program is run by a private nonprofit, not a school system, but is school-based and does participate in CACFP. Are we eligible?**

A: Yes, nonprofit entities that administer childcare programs and participate in CACFP are eligible to apply for a Planning or Implementation grant, in order to support programming that takes place at a pre-K through 12 school site. For training grants, grant projects may target and serve CACFP (or SFSP/SSO) sponsors that operate programs that have sites beyond schools.

**Q: I notice the language in the RFA is consistent in stating “Farm to School.” Will Farm to Child Care programs qualify for the Farm to School grant?**

A: Yes, school-based CACFP childcare programs are eligible to apply for USDA Farm to School grant funding.

**Q: Will non-school based preschools participating in CACFP qualify? We currently operate under CACFP but not in a school-based setting.**

A: No, only school-based CACFP programs operated by a non-profit are eligible to apply for a Planning or Implementation grant.



**Q: I want to apply for a training grant. Do I have to limit attendance to school-based CACFP and SFSP programs?**

A: No, the audience for a Training grant may include non-school based CACFP/SFSP/SSO programs.

## **MATCHING FUNDS**

**Q: Are matching funds required?**

A: Matching funds are required for ALL grant types, namely Training, Implementation, and Planning. Federal funds may constitute no more than 75 percent of the total project budget. The grant recipient must show evidence of matching support of at least 25 percent of the total budget in the form of cash or in-kind contributions, including facilities, staff time, equipment or services provided by state and local governments, non-profit organizations, and private sources as defined in The Richard B. Russell National School Lunch Act. For example, if you are requesting \$100,000 (75% of total project budget) in USDA funds, you must provide a match of no less than \$33,333 (25% of total project budget) for a total project budget of \$133,333. For assistance with calculating the required match amount, please use this tool found on the [Farm to School Applicant Resources webpage](#).

**Q: What is an in-kind contribution?**

A: In-kind contributions are generally defined, when used as a cost share or match for a grant, as the value of goods or services provided by a third-party for the benefit of the grant program, where no funds transferred hands. These contributions cannot satisfy a cost sharing or matching requirement for this grant program if they are used towards satisfying a match requirement under any other Federal grant agreement the applicant is party to.

**Q: What is a cash contribution?**

A: A cash contribution means the recipient's cash outlay, including the outlay of money contributed to the recipient by non-Federal third-parties. Some examples of cash contributions are:

- The salary and fringe benefits of the grantee or third-party employees in proportion to their efforts under a project.
- The grantee's cost to purchase items of equipment to be used under a project.

**Q: Do I need to note where the matching funds will come from in my application?**

A: The match contributions reflected in the grant proposal submitted must be documented, including the basis for the value determination as well as be allowable, reasonable and allocable.

**Q: Do I need all the required matching resources secured prior to issuing the award or submission of application?**

A: Yes, in order for us to issue the award, the grantee must meet the requirement of 25% matching by providing information that they have secured the matching funds and providing confirmation that the matching funds will be *available* during the grant period. The match funds do not need to be *in hand* at the time of submission, but they must be confirmed as secured for the project at the time of application. In addition, documentation of match must be maintained for audit or review of the project.

**Q: Can registration fees collected from participants attending a USDA-funded training count towards the match?**

A: No, these monies would be considered federal funds and would not count.

**Q: Can I use Federal food service funds as a match for this grant program?**



A: No.

**Q: Are there any types of Federal funds I can use as a match for this grant program?**

A: No.

**Q: I have cash in hand for my project right now. Can it count toward the match since I'll be spending it on the same project I'm proposing to USDA?**

A: Yes, however the match must be spent during the same time period as the proposed project. Any cash match expended before the start of the USDA grant period will not count.

**Q: If I anticipate receiving funds from other sources in the future (i.e., weeks, months, year,) may I count them as anticipated, or secured, matching costs?**

A: Yes. The applicant is responsible for providing a 25 percent match and information confirming this match at the time of application. Anticipated funds originating from a source other than the applicant's organization must be documented by a formal letter of intent to provide matching funds upon a grant award. The letter of intent should be on official letterhead and signed by a lead official of the organization providing the match. If the match will come from multiple sources, a letter of intent from each match-providing organization should be included in the application.

Similarly, if the applicant intends to use future volunteer hours allocated against the project during the project period, please include a letter of intent from the lead official of the organization providing the volunteer(s). The total grant budget submitted in the grant application must reflect the requirement of a split of 75 percent Federal and 25 percent non-Federal funds to support the project. If, during the grant period, the 25 percent match is not met, the grantee's Federal funds will be adjusted to ensure the Federal grant funds account for only 75 percent of the total project budget.

**Q: Does time spent cultivating relationships with growers, coordinating purchases and developing menu plans count towards an in-kind match?**

A: Yes, work performed by staff and volunteers on the farm to school project may be used to satisfy the matching contribution.

**Q: Can previous volunteer work hours count towards the in-kind match?**

A: No, matching funds need to be allocated against the project during the project period.

**Q: Are land or buildings an allowable source of matching funds?**

A: Land and buildings are unallowable costs and therefore an in-kind contribution of the same is unallowable.

**Q: Is the use of facilities an allowable source of matching funds? For example, our school would like to host trainings and meetings in our gymnasium. If we waive the rental fee for the meeting space, can this count towards the match?**

A: Yes; the use of a facility may be used as a match for this grant project. You may only charge "market rate" for the rent of the facility.

**Q: Can I use a la carte sales as a match for my proposal?**

A: No. In accordance with 7 CFR Part 210.16(a), school food authorities are required to maintain a non-profit food service. Revenues received by the non-profit school food service are to be used for the operation or improvement of such food services and therefore cannot be used as match.

**Q: If we as a school district decide to forego an indirect cost rate, could that count towards our match?**



A: Indirect costs may be used to satisfy the match component of the grant project. Your organization must have a negotiated indirect cost rate.

## FREE/REDUCED PRICE CALCULATIONS AND POINTS

### **Q: How will high free and reduced-price schools be scored?**

A: Projects that serve a high proportion of children who are eligible for free or reduced price meals will not be given extra points during the scoring process. Rather, during the selection process, the Selection Official may give priority consideration to projects that serve a high proportion of children who are eligible for free or reduced price meals, among other priorities.

### **Q: How will information on the free and reduced-price percentage be collected?**

A: In order to ensure compliance with statutory requirements, all Planning and Implementation grant applicants must complete the Free and Reduced Price Meal Participation section of the Cover Sheet (found on grants.gov).

### **Q: We have three districts with three different free/reduced price rates; how will the percentage be calculated?**

A: A weighted average will be used.

### **Q: We're just working with select schools in our district. Do we submit the district free/reduced price average or the average for the schools we're working with?**

A: Submit the rate for the schools with which you are working.

### **Q: Our school has a free reduced rate of 27 percent. Should we even bother applying? Are the grants going to go primarily to those with high free and reduced rates?**

A: There will be no extra points assigned to projects that serve a high proportion of children who are eligible for free or reduced price meals. Proposals will be scored against the criteria set forth in the RFA, and the highest scoring applications will be recommended to the Selection Official for funding. The Selection Official may give priority consideration to projects that serve a high proportion of children who are eligible for free or reduced price meals, among other priorities.

## BUDGET

### **Q: What can I include in my budget?**

A: Budget expenses can include personnel, contractors, equipment and supplies, meeting expenses, travel, and trainings.

### **Q: Are equipment and supplies allowable expenditures?**

A: Expenditures for equipment (i.e., items of personal property having a useful life of more than one year and a cost of \$5,000 or more such as walk-in freezers, coolers, or ovens) and supplies (e.g., knives, cutting boards, and food processors) are, with the exceptions noted below, allowable expenses for the grant projects. Salad bars are also an allowable expense. Planning Grants and Training Grants: equipment is NOT an allowable cost.

### **Q: Is a vehicle an allowable expenditure?**



A: No, purchasing vehicles with grant funds is not an allowable cost. However, applicants can consider leasing a vehicle or purchasing a trailer/attachment. Trailers and or attachments are not permitted to be self-propelling (i.e. have an engine). Planning Grants and Training Grants: equipment is NOT an allowable cost.

**Q: Can I use grant funds to purchase food?**

A: No more than 10 percent of the grant funds may be used for food purchases in the grant budget. The ultimate goal of funded projects should be to make local food products available on school menus; however, purchasing local products should not be a primary use of grant funds. Food purchases should be limited to educational purposes, including but not limited to: farm to school sample tables, taste tests, or promotional use. Food costs related to conducting a test run of a new local or regional product are also deemed an appropriate use of funds.

**Q: What rate should I use for indirect costs?**

A: If available, the current indirect cost rate negotiated with a Federal negotiating agency or state, if you are a school or school district, should be used. Indirect costs may not exceed the negotiated rate. If a negotiated rate is used, the percentage and base should be indicated. If no rate has been established the applicant may indicate "None—will negotiate" and a reasonable dollar amount for indirect costs may be requested, which will be subject to approval by USDA. In the latter case, if a proposal is recommended for funding, an indirect cost rate proposal must be submitted prior to award to support the amount of indirect costs requested. USDA will request an indirect cost rate proposal and provide instructions, as necessary. An applicant may elect not to charge indirect costs and, instead, use all grant funds for direct costs. If indirect costs are not charged, the phrase "None requested" should be used.

**Q: What should I include in the budget narrative?**

A: You should include a narrative line item description for every allowable cost and show how it supports the project goals. For example, the narrative should describe the positions, related duties, and the percentage of time to be spent on the project, the number of trips and the average cost per trip, the types of supplies to be purchased, the specific equipment to be purchased, contractors tasks, etc.

**Q: Do seeds/plants and livestock fall under the food purchases category?**

A: No, seeds and livestock are supplies.

**Q: Are buildings allowable costs?**

A: Land and buildings are not allowable costs.

**Q: Is construction an allowable cost?**

A: No, construction is not an allowable cost. Replacing old equipment in a school cafeteria, along with rewiring and ventilation upgrades, is considered a non-construction project and therefore is an allowable cost. Erecting a building or making substantial changes to the footprint of a building would be considered a construction project and therefore is not an allowable cost. Any structure over \$5,000 (includes the building and land) constitutes a construction project, and is unallowable for this grant project.

**Q: Is building a greenhouse an allowable cost?**

A: Building a temporary or movable structure is an allowable cost. Building a permanent, and/or stationary structure (such as pouring cement, significantly altering the footprint of a building, wiring etc.) is not an allowable cost. See previous FAQ for construction clarification.

**Q: Can grant funds be used to revitalize an existing greenhouse?**



A: Yes, funds can be used to expand or improve current operations of an existing greenhouse. In the application, please be explicit about how renovating an existing greenhouse will improve its output and reach of products grown.

**Q: We have several organizations that will be participating and receiving funds. How do I determine where to input salary costs in the SF 424A?**

A: Essentially, salaries for personnel that are employed by the applicant would go on the personnel line and the rest would go under the contractual section (assuming they are contractors).

**Q: May I use grant funds to lobby for farm to school at the local, state, or federal levels?**

A: No.

**Q: Are gift cards an allowable expense?**

A: No, gift cards are not an allowable cost under this grant opportunity.

**Q: May I apply federal funding to my in-kind match?**

A: No. Federal funds, regardless of the source, may not be used toward your match.

**Q: I am applying for the Training grant. I would like to offer small travel stipends to my training participants. May I include this in the budget?**

A: Yes.

**Q: Does the page limit also include the budget narrative?**

A: No.

## APPLICATION

**Q: What support will USDA be able to offer applicants during the application process?**

A: USDA is happy to field any general, high-level inquiries that grantees may have regarding the application process. However, USDA is unable to offer specific guidance on how to craft, structure or write one's proposal. In an effort to provide unbiased support to all those interested in the funding opportunity, USDA will refrain from providing advice that cannot otherwise be obtained through the resources that have been made publicly available via the [Farm to School Grant webpage](#). On October 16<sup>th</sup> and 17<sup>th</sup> at 1:00pm ET, USDA will host two RFA webinars. Please register here. You may also view recordings of those webinars on [Farm to School Grant webpage](#).

**Q: Will the USDA Farm to School Team review or edit my application/project narrative before I submit my (official) application?**

A: No, the Farm to School Team will not review any portion of the grant application prior to the due date, or provide comments about the application during the review and selection processes.

**Q: What do I need to include in my grant application?**

A: Please refer to the RFA.

**Q: Will FNS accept applications submitted after the deadline?**

A: No.



**Q: How will I know USDA received my application?**

A: USDA recommends that you print your grants.gov confirmation for your records as proof of timely delivery. Approximately three weeks after the close of the grant period, USDA will confirm receipt of all proposals via email. If you do not receive an email, please contact USDA via email (See RFA for agency contact information).

**Q: What happens if I forget to include one of the documents in my Grants.gov application?**

A: The only means of making a correction or adding to a grants.gov application is re-submitting a new, complete application prior to the deadline. USDA will review the most recent submitted application from your organization (i.e. if an application is submitted on Friday without a vital attachment, and then resubmit on Saturday with the attachment, USDA will only review the Saturday submission).

**Q: Why do you need resumes or vitae of senior personnel?**

A: To ensure that the project directors and other key personnel are qualified to carry out the objectives of the project.

**Q: Can I mail my application?**

A: No, only applications submitted via grants.gov will be accepted.

**Q: Is there an application checklist?**

A: Yes, please see the RFA.

**Q: How should the letters of support be addressed?**

A: All letters of support may be addressed to Greg Walton, Grant Officer. All letters should be included in your application package; e-mailed or postal mailed letters separately will not be accepted.

## REVIEW OF APPLICATION AND AWARD

**Q: What happens after I submit my application?**

A: USDA will conduct an initial screening of all applications to ensure they are eligible and fully responsive.

Eligible and responsive applications are those that meet the following requirements:

1. Submitted by eligible applicants (see Section IV: Eligibility Requirements);
2. Meet all other eligibility requirements (see Section IV: Eligibility Requirements);
3. Submitted on or before the required deadline (see Section VII: Important Dates and Award Periods);
4. Include at least a 25 percent match of the total project cost;
5. Are complete (see Section IX: Grant Application: What to Include); and,
6. Are in the required format (see Section 4.1, Application Format).

If an application does not include all appropriate information, USDA will consider the application to be non-responsive and will eliminate it from further evaluation.

**Q: When will awards be made?**

A: Awards are expected to be made in late spring/early summer of 2019.

**Q: How will my application be reviewed?**

A: After initial screening, USDA will convene an evaluation panel to consider the merit of each grant application deemed complete and responsive to the RFA components. Each application that passes initial screening will be given to the panel to be evaluated and scored according to how well it addresses each



application component listed in the RFA. The panel will assign each application a score using the evaluation criteria and weights specified in the RFA for each evaluation component. Please see the RFA for details on how applications will be evaluated.

**Q: How will applications be selected for funding?**

A: A list of all reviewed applications deemed eligible for award will be submitted to the Selection Official for a final decision regarding funding. The Selection Official has ultimate authority to decide which applications are approved and funded, and generally will adhere to the recommendations set forth by the reviewers, provided that funding is available. However, the Selection Official reserves the right to deviate from those recommendations and fund applications out of rank order to achieve priorities identified within the RFA and Section 18 of the Richard B. Russell National School Lunch Act, the legislation that enacted the Farm to School Grant Program. The Selection Official may take other factors, including Food and Nutrition Services (FNS) and USDA priorities, into account when granting awards and/or not awarding a particular proposal.

**Q: Will my application be funded at the amount requested?**

A: As part of the technical review process, USDA will review applicants' budgets to ensure that all costs are reasonable, allowable, and applicable. Applications selected and approved for funding with budgets that are realistic, well justified, and supported will likely be funded at the requested amounts. However, USDA reserves the right to fund applications at a lower amount if USDA determines that the project can be implemented with less funding; or at lesser amounts if Federal funding is not sufficient to fully fund all applications that merit awards. This is subject to availability of funds.

**Q: Will applications be reviewed on a regional level or will they be reviewed at a state level?**

A: Applications will be reviewed on a national level, and we will seek to ensure geographical diversity and equitable treatment of urban, rural, and tribal communities.

**Q: What type of financial and progress reporting is required by awardees?**

A: At the start of the grant, planning and implementation grantees will submit a baseline report. All grant awardees will submit financial reports on a quarterly basis and programmatic reporting on a semi-annual basis throughout the grant term. A final programmatic and financial report will be required 90 days after the close of the grant term. The award document will indicate the reporting form and schedule for submitting programmatic and financial reports to USDA. For a general idea of the reporting schedule, view the [FY 2018 Farm to School Grant Reporting Timeline](#).

**Q: Will grant funds be provided to awardees as a lump sum, or will they be reimbursed?**

A: USDA expects to make funds available to the grantee in advance of need.

## **APPLICATION SUBMISSION ISSUES**

**Q: If I have problems with grants.gov, will USDA staff help me submit or accept my application package after the deadline?**

A: No, USDA will not provide applicants technical assistance with the grants.gov system. The grants.gov technical support center can be reached at 800-518-4726 or [support@grants.gov](mailto:support@grants.gov). Please check our [website](#) and [sign up for our E-letter](#) in order to receive information regarding the date of this webinar. The webinar will be recorded and will be posted online on the [USDA Farm to School webpage](#) as it becomes available.

**Q: Where can I get more help if I still have questions about the Farm to School Program or application?**



A: The USDA Farm to School Team strongly recommends that you read the Farm to School Grant RFA before submitting questions. If you still have questions after reading the RFA, you can forward your question to: [farmtoschool@usda.gov](mailto:farmtoschool@usda.gov).