

## **Farm to school experts (~40) needed to read and score farm to school grant proposals**

*Help ensure healthy kids and happy grants officers*

USDA's [Farm to School](#) Grant Program is designed to increase the availability of local foods in schools and help give children a sense of where their food comes from. Authorized by the [Healthy, Hunger-Free Kids Act](#) and administered through USDA's Food and Nutrition Service, USDA awards \$5 million on an annual basis to [farm to school programs](#) across the country.

Grant applications for FY15 funding are due April 24, 2013. Last year, USDA received over 400 proposals; we expect to receive at least that many or more this year. The success of this popular grant program is dependent on having a robust team of volunteer reviewers to help score and rank proposals. **Thus, we are currently recruiting proposal reviewers.** Please consider serving as a volunteer Farm to School Grant Program reviewer.

### **Eligibility Requirements**

- You must have extensive farm to school related knowledge and experience
- You may not be associated as an employee, partner, etc. with a Farm to School Grant (CDFA #: 10.575) application submitted for fiscal year 2014 funds (i.e. applications due April 24, 2013)
  - See conflict of interest (COI) as outlined in the attached COI statement

### **Details (see other edits)**

- Reviews will be conducted by teams comprised of both federal employees and external volunteer reviewers with knowledge specific to farm to school programming.
- Reviewers will be asked to read no more than 15 proposals that will vary in length from 5 – 10 pages.
- Previous experience with or understanding of local and regional food systems work is helpful.
- Each review team will have a lead reviewer responsible for helping ensure the process runs smoothly.
- Reviewers will receive detailed training and instructions on how to complete the review process.
- Reviewers will be able to call upon farm to school program staff at any time for support and assistance as necessary.
- Proposals will be distributed for review in late May.
- Depending on review assignments, reviews will be due 4-5 weeks from the time proposals are distributed for review.
- Summer vacation schedules can generally be accommodated. (If we know dates we need to work around, we can likely get you on a team that meets your schedule needs.)
- We estimate the time commitment to be 35 – 45 hours in total over 4-5 weeks.
- We estimate needing ~40 volunteer reviewers and would like to have **reviewers confirmed by April 30** at the latest.
- No financial compensation is available.
- No travel is required.

**Ready to sign up?**

Please send an email to [farmtoschool@fns.usda.gov](mailto:farmtoschool@fns.usda.gov) indicating your interest in serving as a farm to school grant program reviewer. Please provide the following information:

- Name, title, organizational affiliation, contact info
- Brief description of farm to school expertise (need to know if you meet the basic eligibility requirements)
- Any possible conflicts of interest (list boards you serve on, etc.)
- Any date conflicts or considerations we should be aware of

USDA staff will review all volunteer applications; however, volunteers will be selected based on a number of factors, including but not limited to program need, volunteer qualifications, etc.

**Added incentives**

If you or members of your staff are able to devote time to reviewing farm to school grants, you'll be helping USDA achieve a key programmatic objective. You'll also be helping schools across the country create consistently reliable markets for US agricultural producers. Even better, you'll play a part in helping children make lifelong healthy eating choices. Please join us!

**Questions about the grants program or review process?**

Laura Brown, USDA Farm to School Program

[laura.brown@fns.usda.gov](mailto:laura.brown@fns.usda.gov)

202-720-0092

**Questions about USDA's farm to school program and priorities?**

Matthew Russell, USDA Farm to School Program

[matthew.russell@ams.usda.gov](mailto:matthew.russell@ams.usda.gov)

202-720-6765

## Attachment

### Conflict of Interest

As a Farm to School Grant Program (FSGP) reviewer, you may have a conflict, or an appearance of a conflict, with one or more of the applications you have been asked to review. Should any conflict arise during your term as a FSGP reviewer, you must bring the matter to the attention of the FSGP Grant Officer. If you have any questions about this Conflict of Interest statement, please contact the FSGP Grant Officer.

Insider Information: If your position gives you access to information not generally available to the public, you must not use that information for your personal benefit or make it available for the personal benefit of any other individual or organization. This is to be distinguished from the entirely appropriate general benefit of learning more about FSGP, learning from other FSGP reviewers, or becoming better acquainted with the state of a given discipline.

You must disqualify yourself as a reviewer of an application if you have one or more of the following:

a. Financial Interest: If you have a direct and predictable financial interest in the outcome; or if any of the following have direct and predictable and predictable financial interests in the outcome:

- Your spouse, or minor child;
- General partner, organization or entity which you serve as officer, director, trustee, or general partner or employee;
- A person with whom you are negotiating for or have an arrangement concerning prospective employment.

b. Organizational/Institutional Relationship or Relationship with Key Personnel Listed in the Application:

If you have direct or indirect interests with the organization or personnel due to the following:

- Current employment at the institution as a professor, (incl. adjunct or visiting), consultant, or member of an advisory board
- Past (within previous 12 months) or future employment, including informal re-employment, with said institution
- Pre- or post-award involvement as an officer or employee of the federal government
- Past or present association with key personnel as:
  - A known family relationship (spouse, sibling, minor child, or parent)
  - Thesis or postdoctoral advisee/advisor
  - Co-author on a publication within the past 3 years, including pending publications and submissions
  - Collaborator on a project within the past 3 years, including current and planned collaborations

c. Other Relationships: Any relationship, such as a close personal friendship, that you think might tend to affect your judgment or be seen as doing so by a reasonable person familiar with the relationship.

This includes all conflicts-of-interest, or compensation of any type (e.g. money, goods, services) for the prior 3 years.

## **Confidentiality**

While the content of applications is subject to the Freedom of Information Act (FOIA), reviewers must not disclose information contained in the applications as it is the role of USDA, not the reviewer, to determine whether such information is releasable pursuant to the FOIA. If you have any questions about this Confidentiality statement, please contact the FSMIP Staff Officer.

Obligation to Maintain the Confidentiality of Applications and Applicants: AMS receives grant applications in confidence and protects the confidentiality of their contents. For this reason, you must not copy, quote, or otherwise use or disclose to anyone, any material from any application you are asked to review.

Confidentiality of the Review Process and Reviewer Names: FSGP keeps reviews and your identity as a reviewer of a specific application confidential to the maximum extent possible. If consensus reviews go forward with funding recommendations to selection official your name and other specific identifying information will be removed first. If an unsuccessful applicant requests feedback on their proposal, they will receive a feedback sheet, but your name and other specific identifying information will be removed first.

It is critical that you respect the confidentiality of all other reviewers. Do not disclose their identities, relative scores, assessment comments, or rankings, or other details about the application review process.

Disposal of Review Materials: Upon completion of your review, please destroy all printed and electronic materials related to the application. Hard copy materials may instead be returned to the FSGP contact. If you decline to review an application, please maintain the integrity of the review process by returning all hard copy application materials to FSGP and deleting any electronic application materials.