



THE USDA FARM TO SCHOOL GRANT PROGRAM



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EVERY YEAR, the United States Department of Agriculture (USDA) awards up to \$5 million in grants to help schools connect with local producers and teach children where their food comes from.

Eligible entities

Grantees include schools and districts (large and small, rural and urban), Indian tribal organizations, agricultural producers or groups of agricultural producers, non-profit entities, and state and local agencies.

Three types of grants

Grants can help new farm to school programs get started or expand existing efforts. Funds support a wide range of activities from training, planning, and developing partnerships to creating new menu items, establishing supply chains, offering taste tests to children, purchasing equipment, planting school gardens, and organizing field trips to agricultural operations. USDA generally solicits applications for three types of grants.

- 1. Planning grants** are for school districts or schools just starting to incorporate farm to school program elements into their operations.
- 2. Implementation grants** help school districts or schools scale or further develop existing farm to school initiatives.

- 3. Support Service grants** are for state and local agencies, Indian tribal organizations, agricultural producers or groups of agricultural producers, and non-profit entities working with school districts or schools to further develop existing farm to school programs and to provide broad reaching support services to farm to school initiatives.

Award amounts

Planning grants range from \$20,000 to \$45,000, while implementation grants and support service grants range from \$65,000 to \$100,000. Grant applicants are required to provide matching support of at least 25 percent of the total project budget in the form of cash or in-kind contributions.

Timeline

The timeline varies from year to year, but USDA generally releases a request for applications (RFA) near the beginning of the calendar year. Applications are due approximately three months after the RFA is released, and proposals are reviewed throughout the spring and summer. Final awards are announced near the start of the federal fiscal year, which begins in October.



Types of projects

Here are just a few examples of the types of projects USDA has funded through its Farm to School Grant Program:

- * The Lawrence County District in Walnut Ridge, Arkansas is working with other school districts to pool their food dollars and aggregate buying power to attract new producers to the school food service market;
- * Weld County School District 6 in Greeley, Colorado is expanding its kitchen facilities to serve local products year-round through processing and freezing techniques;
- * Lake County Community Development Corporation, in Ronan, Montana is working with regional lentil farmers to procure protein and fiber rich lentil patties;
- * The Washington State Department of Agriculture is conducting regional "mobile tours" in which agricultural producers and school food service directors tour the state together, learning about agricultural specialties, identifying opportunities for partnership, and solidifying regional networks;
- * Chicago Public Schools in Chicago, Illinois is implementing a school garden food safety program;
- * Baltimore City Public Schools in Baltimore, Maryland is using salad bars as a way to get student-grown and locally-sourced ingredients into cafeterias;
- * School District 1J Multnomah County in Portland, Oregon is getting a "Fresh Start" by bringing local ingredients into its breakfast program;
- * The Vermont Agency of Agriculture, Food and Markets is working with four regional food hubs (servicing 56 schools) to strengthen innovative distribution models for getting local food to schools; and,
- * Portland Public Schools in Portland, Maine is creating experiential learning opportunities such as school gardens, after-school agriculture clubs, and a "Local Food Show" that features partner farms, recipes, and student projects.



For more information, and to sign up to receive USDA's bi-weekly Farm to School E-letter, please visit www.fns.usda.gov/farmtoschool. Questions? Email us at farmtoschool@fns.usda.gov.

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