

May 1, 2012

Attention: Gregory Walton, Grants Officer
Grants and Fiscal Policy Division
U.S. Department of Agriculture, FNS
3101 Park Center Drive, Room 732
Alexandra, VA 22302
E-mail: Farm2School2013@fns.usda.gov

This letter serves to inform you of our intent to submit a Farm to School grant application. We will be submitting as a non-profit organization.

We intend to submit an implementation grant proposal, on behalf of:

The Food Coalition
1234 Main Street
City, State
54321

Contact Information:

Johanna Director, Executive Director
The Food Coalition
1234 Main Street
City, State
54321

Phone: (555) 555-1234
Email: J.Director@email.edu

Thank you,

Mrs. Johanna Director, Executive Director
The Food Coalition

Please note: This example grant proposal is offered as a courtesy to farm to school grant applicants. It should not be interpreted as an example of what a successful application includes or must include. Applicant proposals will be unique to applicant needs and context. The concepts included here are illustrative only and should not be interpreted as specific recommendations for program activities. The concepts and activities described herein should also not be interpreted as preferred, accepted, or otherwise endorsed by USDA or farm to school grant program reviewers.

FARM TO SCHOOL GRANT CFDA#10.575 APPLICATION COVER SHEET

Name of Organization: The Food Coalition (TFC)

Address: 1234 Main Street

City: Anywhere

State: State

Zip: 54321

Contact:

Name: Johanna Director

Title: Executive Director

Phone: (555) 555-1234

e-mail: j.director@email.org

Project Title: The Anywhere Farm to School Project: Using Regional Resources to Improve Nutrition and Promote Education

Type of Request

- Planning Grant
 Implementation Grant: Schools
 Implementation Grant: All Other

Type of (Lead) Entity

- School
 State/Local Organization
 ITO
 Ag Producer or Producer Group
 Non-Profit Organization

(For Schools Submissions) Type of Submission:

- Individual SFA Submission
 (One district or school)
 "Cluster" SFA Application
 (One lead SFA working with multiple SFA's)
 "Linked" Application
 (A submission that relates to other individual submission(s))

If this is a "Linked" Application (an application that relates to other applications), please list the name of the other applications to which your project is related.

For Individual SFA Submission (2010-11)		# Schools in District:	# Served by this Proposal:	Total Enrollment:
Avg % Free/Reduced:	Avg % Full Pay:	Highest % Free/Reduced:	Lowest % Free/Reduced:	
Avg # Meals Served/Day: (Complete boxes at right.)	Breakfast:	Lunch:	Dinner:	

For "Cluster" Submissions (2010-11): Please name other SFAs and indicate how many schools in each district along with Free/Reduced %. (e.g. "Barnes School District (27 schools, 27 schools served by this app, avg F/R = 62% with high of 74% and low of 35%.))

For All others Applicants:

Name of SFA(s) this project is connected to: (Detail Free/Reduced for this SFA below.)
 Partners School District #1; Partners School District #2

Avg % Free/Reduced: 81%; 76%	Avg % Full Pay: 19%; 24%	Total Enrollment: 1 4,000; 11,000
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Brief Project Description (200 words or less): The Food Coalition's (TFC) mission is to "promote access for all Americans to a healthy, equitable and sustainable food system." TFC was founded in 1998 and has been a registered 501(c) (3) since 2001. Since 1998, TFC has conducted food system programming in four topic areas: food production, distribution and infrastructure, health and wellness and food waste recovery. With the aim of building stronger farm to school initiatives throughout our region, we see opportunities in two key areas, (1) working more in-depth with individual districts, and (2) providing quality regional networking opportunities for farm to school stakeholders (i.e. schools, farmers, producers, nonprofit partners, etc.) to promote information sharing and relationship building. The proposed project will span two years, and enable TFC to (1) expand programming within two existing partner schools, (2) establish one new school partner, and (3) expand the reach of the annual grower-buyer meeting and subsequent networking opportunities.

Total Project Cost: \$208,450	Grant Request: Note \$ amount and % of total \$100,000 / 48%	Match: Note \$ amount and % of total \$108,450 / 52%
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Background Information

1. Organizational Information

The Food Coalition's (TFC) mission is to "promote access for all Americans to a healthy, equitable and sustainable food system." TFC was founded in 1998 and has been a registered 501(c) (3) since 2001. Since 1998, TFC has conducted food system programming in four topic areas: food production, distribution and infrastructure, health and wellness and food waste recovery. Example projects, by topic area, include:

Food Production: TFC partners with the several regional park systems to set aside land for historic farming operations and provides small business planning services to new and existing farmers, ranchers and food processors. Additionally, TFC has overseen a farm secession program, helping to match new and beginning farmers with existing farmers looking to share their land and expertise.

Distribution and Infrastructure: In 2002, TFC worked with four municipal planning agencies to conduct a local food system assessment. The assessment gathered data on farm land location, crop production, regional food economic indicators, retail outlets and processing facilities. In 2010, TFC partnered with Local University to open a local food hub cooperative, allowing small farm operators a means to reach larger retail markets.

Health and Wellness: Since 2009, TFC has worked with numerous regional partners to help 26 farmers markets install EBT services, allowing residents to use SNAP benefits to purchase fresh regional produce. Also, on an annual basis, TFC publishes a local food guide, which includes links to free nutrition resources, healthy recipes, a farmers' market guide, canning and freezing instructions and more. Finally, TFC has worked with numerous limited-resources neighborhood groups to identify ways (i.e. incentive programs, retail renovations, policy initiatives, etc.) to address limited access to healthy food retail.

Food Waste Recovery: In 2009, TFC lead the planning process and implementation of a new food composting program at the region's largest indoor food market. The program diverts approximately 2,000 pounds/week of food waste from local landfills, is used in youth educational programs and supports several urban gardens.

2. Describe your experience in farm to school initiatives

Through the four TFC program areas, we have worked on farm to school in many ways. Organized by program area, this includes:

Food Production: For the past 5 years, TFC has organized an annual Grower-Buyer meeting, bringing together regional producers and commercial buyers (i.e., K-12 schools, restaurants, hospitals, etc.) to build relationships and discuss new business opportunities. To support the large annual meeting, TFC works with individual school districts to host smaller meetings with regional growers to discuss school needs and to recruit potential vendors. TFC also publishes an annual Buy Local magazine, which includes a list of regional producers, along with regional schools, colleges and hospital involved in local procurement initiatives.

Distribution and Infrastructure: TFC works with the State Department of Agriculture and several grower cooperatives to assess existing regional distribution options and recommend ways to create efficiencies. For example, as a result of TFC's work, three regional growers now partner with a regional distributor to deliver to an urban school district. It was a win-win-win situation for the school district (consistent supply), distributor (new business) and farmers (more time in the fields and continued access to a new market).

Health and Wellness: Starting with one school district in 1998 and expanding to two by 2011, TFC provides in-class and experiential education classes to school children grades K-12. Programs include building and maintaining school gardens, farm visits, classroom farmer presentations and harvest of the month food sample events.

Food Waste Recovery: As one of the newest TFC programs, staff works with six classes (grades 5th – 6th) in two schools to operate a food compost and recycling program. Under TFC and school staff supervision and instruction, students learn about the value of composting, compost safety and home composting techniques.

3. Farm to School Lessons Learned to Date

The Food Coalition has learned many lessons over the years - both about what works well and what does not. The most important overarching lesson we've learned is that "no one size fits all," and this is true across all program areas. At times it has been easy to assume that TFC staff knows what is best for a community partner because of previous successes in similar situations, but this inevitably backfires and slows down or halts a project or partnership. For example, a distribution partnership that works well in one community may not work for another. Likewise, one school district may be most interested in implementing a salad bar program to promote local produce, while another district is most interested in incorporating local protein in a hot dish. Such lessons have reinforced the importance of taking time to build relationships and good communication channels early in any given planning process or partnership.

To help ensure our services and programs meet the needs our school and community partners, TFC focuses its time and energy on farm to school partnerships that have existing support from school administrators and food service staff. This process has worked well for TFC and we hope to build on this success and expand our program reach over the coming years.

With the aim of building stronger farm to school initiatives throughout our region, we see opportunities in two key areas, (1) working more in-depth with individual districts, and (2) providing quality regional networking opportunities for farm to school stakeholders (i.e. schools, farmers, producers, nonprofit partners, etc.) to promote information sharing and relationship building.

A key challenge that TFC has faced over the years has been keeping farm to school partners up to date and working in a collaborative manner. Having a full-time, dedicated staff person will allow TFC to proactively engage diverse stakeholders (e.g. farmers/ranchers, distributors, teachers, food service directors, etc.) to provide meaningful support and consistent communications.

The Project

4. Proposed Project

The proposed project will span two years, and enable TFC to (1) expand programming within two existing partner schools, (2) establish one new school partner, and (3) expand the reach of the annual grower-buyer meeting and subsequent networking opportunities.

To achieve goal #1, TFC will expand and enrich our partnership with two existing school partners. This will include increasing the number of students who participate in farm visits and increase the total volume of local produce used in school meals. Additionally, TFC will help the schools incorporate local protein items in at least one regular menu item. The school partners include Partners School District #1 (PSD #1) and Partner School District #2. PSD#1 was selected for this project because they have a high rate of students eligible for free and reduced priced meals (81%) and have successfully implemented farm to school programming over the past four years, including a robust school garden program, a farm to school salad bar initiative and the formation of a student-lead health and wellness committee to help oversee farm to school efforts. The district utilizes a self-operating central kitchen and partners with several local producers and distributors to integrate local produce into meal programs. PSD#2 uses a food service management company, which has been very supportive of the District's growing demand for local products. PSD#2 has a high rate of eligible students for free and reduced priced meals (76%) and operates a very successful harvest of the month program.

To achieve goal #2, TFC will partner with a new school district to help them expand their farm to school efforts. With the assistance of new funding, TFC will provide comprehensive technical support, programming, marketing resources and evaluation assistance. Numerous schools have reached out to TFC over the past several years, and the newest partner will be selected to meet the priorities of the grant program.

To achieve goal #3, TFC will increase marketing and outreach for the annual grower-buyer meeting, and promote the use of similar networking opportunities in other communities and regions. The grower-buyer meeting has helped numerous schools connect with regional suppliers, and TFC will use USDA funds to better promote the meeting to schools, producers and farmers. High priority will be given to recruiting farmers and processors in order to better educate them about school food market opportunities. TFC will also support smaller follow-up meetings between individual districts (or clusters of districts) and local producers. It is at these smaller meetings that schools can explain in detail their procurement needs and regulations.

5. Key Project Partners

Public School District#1: PSD#1 is an urban school district with 14,000 students (K-12). The District has a high rate of students eligible for free and reduced priced meals (81%) and has successfully implemented farm to school programming over the past four years, including a robust school garden program, a farm to school salad bar initiative and the formation of a student-lead health and wellness committee to help oversee farm to school efforts. The district utilizes a self-operating central kitchen and partners with several local producers and distributors to integrate local produce into meal programs. TFC has worked with PSD#1 for the past 3 years on all aspects of their farm to school programming.

Public School District #2: PSD#2 is an urban school district with 11,000 students (K-12) and utilizes a food service management company, which has been very supportive of the district's growing demand for local products. PSD#2 has a high rate of student eligible for free and reduced priced meals (76%) and operates a very successful harvest of the month program. In 2009, PSD#2 hired a part-time F2S coordinator, who is responsible for coordinating day-to-day efforts. TFC has worked with PSD#1 for the past 5 years on all aspects of their farm to school programming.

Department of Agriculture: Since 2008, the Food Coalition has hosted a regional grower-buyer meeting in conjunction with the State Department of Agriculture. The regional event builds on the annual statewide meetings hosted by the Department since 2005. In addition, collaborating on the grower-buyer meeting, TFC works closely with the Department Farm to School Coordinator, sharing resources, best practices and lessons learned. The Department has been a key partner in helping identify and reach out to regional farmers and ranchers, and runs a successful state "buy local" marketing campaign.

6. Objectives, Activities and Timeline

Objective #1: *By September 30, 2014, host two annual regional grower-buyer meetings so that regional school districts can identify new product options and suppliers.*

Activities:

- *Recruit for the planning committee; encourage widespread participation*
 - *Who: Executive Director (By: November 2012)*
- *Enhance farmer/rancher directory to encourage greater participation*
 - *Who: Project Coordinator (By: 2013)*

Objective #2: *By August 31, 2013, host at least three different meet and greet events so that partner school districts can discuss business details with local/regional farmers, ranchers, processors and suppliers.*

Activities:

- *Recruit for the planning committee; encourage widespread participation*
 - *Who: Project Director (By: March 213)*
- *Set meeting locations and agenda*
 - *Who: Planning committee (By: April 2013)*

Objective #3: *By August 31, 2013, recruit one new school district partner to plan and implement farm to school activities.*

Activities:

- *Set meeting schedule with interested school districts and develop decision criterion.*
 - *Who: Project Coordinator (By: March 2013)*
- *Select school and develop a Farm to School Leadership Team to establish goal*
 - *Who: Project Coordinator, (By: May 2013)*

Objective #4: *By February 15, 2013, establish expanded work plan with Partner School District #1 and Partner School District#2.*

Activities:

- *Set two-year timeline and establish F2S education goals and objectives*
 - *Who: District Leadership Team,(By: December 2012)*
- *Query schools regarding which types of producers they are most interested in*
 - *Who: Project Coordinator,(By: February 2013)*

7. Evaluation Plan

TFC has established clear process evaluation goals and data collection protocols for each major activity. For example, we will track the total volume and value of the local food procured by our three partner schools. However, because it is often difficult to track local products purchased through distributors, TFC will work closely with these companies to establish a reasonable and effective tracking mechanism. We will also work with our school contacts to collect educational outreach data, including the number of students who receive in-class agriculture and nutrition lessons and/or attend farm field trips.

In addition to collecting program reach data, TFC will also document the lessons learned, challenges and best practices. This information will be collated into a report and shared with the national farm to school community via the TFC website. TFC employs an evaluation coordinator, who will be responsible for planning and managing our evaluation efforts. The organization has managed several private foundation and local, state and federal agency grants and has successfully collected process evaluation in accordance with the grant requirements. Our organization has never participated in or conducted an impact evaluation. We recognize the dearth of rigorous impact evaluation of farm to school initiatives and TFC would happily join or support such an effort.

8. Sustainability

To ensure our regional farm to school efforts are sustained over the long-term, TFC will form a F2S Oversight Committee (Committee). The Committee will be comprised of the TFC Leadership Team, three school representatives (one from each school partner), and two community representatives (a parent and a regional farmer or rancher). The Committee will be tasked with developing a farm to school sustainability plan, and will meet on a quarterly basis throughout the two year project and use the time to review the region's F2S efforts, prioritize activities, set short-, mid- and long-term goals, and develop a comprehensive plan with clear and tangible action steps. The overarching goal is to integrate farm to school activities into regular school procedures, minimizing the need for outside funding. However, if necessary, the Committee will be responsible for developing an outreach plan to secure community partners and additional funding sources to ensure the long term viability of high priority farm to school activities.

Quality Assurance & Staffing

9. Project Management & Quality Assurance

To ensure the project activities are completed on time, within budget and with quality results, TFC will establish a F2S Leadership Team. The Team will consist of the TFC Executive Director, Project Manager, Evaluation Coordinator, and Outreach Coordinator, and will meet on a monthly basis to:

- Review program progress;
- Review program budget and expenditures;
- Facilitate quarterly meetings with partner districts; and
- Conduct ongoing meetings with subcontractors.

As noted in Section 8. Sustainability, the F2S Oversight Committee will be responsible for:

- Participating in quarterly committee meetings; and
- Conduct sustainability planning.

10. Staffing

Johanna Director, Executive Director – Ms. Director has served as the Executive Director of The Food Coalition since 2001. She will oversee direction, timeline and implementation planning for the farm to school implementation project. In addition, she will play an active role on the Farm to School Leadership Team and the Oversight Committee. See attached resume.

William Coordinator, Project Coordinator – Mr. Coordinator will oversee the day-to-day farm to school operations, and manage all supporting staff efforts. He will be responsible for coordinating school and community activities, along with ensuring that all grant reporting requirements are met in a timely manner. See attached resume.

11. Financial Management System

To date, TFC has successfully managed three federal grants: USDA Risk Management Agency (2007), Centers for Disease Control and Invention (2008-09) and USDA Community Foods Project (2010-11). The organization has a financial management department responsible for tracking expenditures and allocating funds according to project guidelines. Coinciding with our federal grant management experience, TFC has received general operating and programming support from two philanthropic foundations, Private Foundation and Family Foundation, for over a decade. We have a strong relationship with our foundation supporters, based on clear communication and accurate financial reporting. Additionally, TFC publishes an annual report, showcasing our accomplishments, expenditures and future goals.