



Deadline Extension for Farm to School Proposals

In order to accommodate applicants and potential applicants to the Farm to School Competitive Grants Program the application period is being reopened beginning on October 26, 2015.

All proposals must be submitted through the Grants Gateway by 4:30 pm on Monday, November 2. Late proposals cannot be accepted.

Proposals that were in process and/or proposals that were submitted after the original deadline may be submitted. New proposals that were not in process may be submitted. Proposals that were submitted may be revised and resubmitted if the applicant would like to make revisions to the proposal that was submitted.

Questions on this process may be directed to Meg.Mccabe@agriculture.ny.gov.

New York State
Department of Agriculture & Markets

REQUEST FOR PROPOSALS

for the

2015 - NEW YORK STATE

Farm to School Program
Competitive Grants

INTRODUCTION

The New York State Department of Agriculture and Markets invites proposals that will increase the capacity of schools to procure and to serve locally-produced specialty crops in school meal programs.

PROPOSAL SUBMISSION REQUIREMENTS

Proposals must be submitted online through the Grants Gateway. The code for this request for proposals is “FTSCG”.

QUESTIONS CONCERNING THE RFP

All questions about this RFP must be submitted in writing (fax or e-mail will be accepted) to:

Meg McCabe
NYS Department of Agriculture and Markets
10B Airline Drive
Albany, NY 12235
Fax: (518) 457-2716
E-mail: meg.mccabe@agriculture.ny.gov

All questions must be submitted to Ms. McCabe by 4:30 p.m. on Tuesday October 6. Applicants must note that all clarifications are to be resolved prior to the submission of a proposal. A list of questions about the program which are received from potential applicants, and answers to those questions, as well as any changes, additions or deletions to the RFP, will be posted in the “Funding Opportunities” section of the Department’s website, www.agriculture.ny.gov, along with the electronic version of this RFP. Questions and responses may be posted as questions are received. All questions and answers will be posted by Thursday, October 8.

1. GENERAL PROGRAM INFORMATION

1.1 Program Description

Farm to School is the promotion and use of foods produced by local farmers in meals served in cafeterias of K-12 schools. Associations between farms and schools through the cafeteria and classroom can enhance the quality of food served. With over 700 school districts in NYS, there is the opportunity to foster relationships with local farmers, food hubs, producers, processors, and distributors to benefit school-age children. Where increases in childhood obesity rates are presenting challenges to communities, a statewide farm to school implementation grant program may offer a solution to improve the nutritional quality of the meals consumed by students in schools. Thereby, combating childhood obesity and helping to end childhood hunger.

Currently, in NYS there are a number of activities occurring around Farm to School. In 2002, Farm to School Legislation was enacted by the NYS Departments of Education and Agriculture

and Markets which facilitates the purchase of NYS products by schools, universities and other educational institutions. The legislation also formalized the NY Harvest for NY Kids Week to promote NY farm products; now called the Farm to You Fest. In addition, the NYS Department of Agriculture and Markets manages the NYS Farm to School Coordinating Committee which strives to connect schools with local farms and food producers; strengthen local agriculture; improve student health; and promote regional food systems awareness.

While serving locally produced food in school cafeterias might appear simple, developing farm to school connections is no easy task and presents several challenges. Currently in NYS, there is no systems-wide approach or infrastructure to implementing Farm to School programs. The current programs are organized at the school district level based on the interest of the food service director, principal(s), parents and other farm to school stakeholders. At this time, there isn't an established infrastructure or network of stakeholders that include farmers, food service directors, food service contract management companies, food distributors, processors, agriculture organizations, and commodity organizations working together to establish a systems approach to Farm to School. In addition, other challenges include:

- **Seasonality:** Farmers plan their crops in January but schools place their bids for products in the summer. In addition, the summer growing season is when schools are not in session.
- **Safety:** products have to be processed in a specific manner to ensure food safety.
- **Inconsistent quality, quantity, and sizing:** produce has to be served in standard units and meet specifications.
- **Processing and Packaging:** vegetables and fruits have to be processed and packaged in standard units so they are easily used by schools and meet specifications. This processing includes significant labor costs.
- **Bidding:** sending and reviewing bids from individual farmers can be time consuming and complex.
- **Price:** locally grown produce is often more expensive than produce procured through a vendor.
- **Delivery/pick up:** when purchasing from many growers, coordination is needed to distribute the produce to schools.
- **The annual Farm to School survey highlights that schools need the following additional resources to handle fresh, unprocessed foods:**
 - 31.8% (n=170) need equipment to prepare fresh produce;
 - 23.8% (n=168) need staff with skills to prep fresh produce;
 - 21.1% (n=171) need cold storage for fresh food;
 - 16.4% (n=171) need facilities in which to prepare fresh food;
 - 14.7% (n=170) need dry storage for shelf stable product.

In order to maximize the chances of successfully procuring more local food products for integration into school lunch programs an integrated program should build on current assets while having the flexibility to fill in gaps and custom tailor relationships between schools and suppliers that meet the needs of both parties and the student consumers.

The “Overall Goals” of the Farm to School Competitive Grants Program are:

1. Increase total pounds of local specialty crops procured by schools/districts for school meals programs
2. Increase number of NYS producers and aggregators that are selling specialty crops to participating school(s)
3. Increase number of new partnerships that help strengthen farm to school, including local producers, distributors, food hubs, and other community food system and health organizations
4. Increase variety of local specialty crops procured by schools/districts for school meals programs
5. Increase student knowledge of and preference for locally produced specialty crops.

To reach these overall goals a series of “Program Objectives” have been specified for proposers to choose from to reach the “Overall Goals” of the Program. These “Program Objectives” are:

1. Hire a local or regional farm to school coordinator
2. Conduct trainings for food service staff to increase knowledge of local procurement and preparation of locally produced specialty crops
3. Purchase the equipment needed to increase capacity of school kitchen and food service staff to prepare and serve local produced specialty crops
4. Execute capital improvement to support the transport and/or storage of locally produced specialty crops
5. Survey students with respect to their knowledge of and preference for locally produced specialty crops

1.2 Funding Available

There is a total of \$350,000 available statewide for the Farm to School Competitive Grants Program. Grant awards shall not exceed \$100,000 or be less than \$25,000. Applicants may only apply for one grant per funding period either individually or as a group. Due to restrictions on the federal portion of the funding the full amount of funding is available for proposals related to objectives 1, 2 and 5. For objectives 3 and 4 \$250,000 of the \$350,000 is available for proposals responding to these objectives.

2. ELIGIBILITY & SCOPE

2.1 Applicant Eligibility

Eligible applicants include:

- Government Entities including public schools and public school districts
- Charter Schools
- Not-for-profit organizations including schools
- Indian Tribal Organizations

2.2 Ineligible Applicants

The following entities are not eligible to apply for funding:

- for-profit entities other than Charter Schools
- individuals

2.3 Definitions

- **School Food Authority:** The governing body which is responsible for the administration of one or more schools and which has the legal authority to operate a nonprofit school food service therein or otherwise approved by FNS (Food and Nutrition Service of the Department of Agriculture) to operate the NSLP (National School Lunch Program).
- **School Meals Program:** Feeding programs administered at the school or district level including school lunch, school lunch and summer meals programs.
- **Local or Regional Farm to School Coordinator:** Individual or organization responsible for establishing relationships between schools and local producers for the procurement of local food products for use in school meals programs
- **Local specialty crops:** For the purpose of this Program, fruits and vegetables, tree nuts, dried fruits, and horticultural products.

2.4 Project Eligibility

Eligible projects are:

- Training of school food service staff in the procurement and preparation of locally produced specialty crops.
- Purchase of equipment to increase the ability SFAs to procure, prepare and serve locally produced specialty crops.
- Employing a local or regional farm to school coordinator.
- Capital improvements to support the transport and/or storage of local specialty crops.

2.5 Project Duration

Proposed projects must be completed within two years of the contract start date.

2.6 Eligible Costs

Grant funds may be used for any of the following purposes directly related to completion of an eligible project, including but not limited to:

- salaries and wages
- contractor services
- permanent physical/structural improvements
- supplies and equipment
- insurance and permits (excluding permit to operate a farmers' market at proposed location)
- transportation

Eligible costs must be directly related to the eligible project. A portion of the funding for this Program is anticipated to be provided through the USDA Specialty Crops Block Grant Program. These funds have restrictions that prohibit the use of these funds for the purchase of equipment and capital improvements. Therefore, proposals that do not contain such elements will be competing for a larger share of the funding.

2.7 Ineligible Costs

Grant funds may not be used for the following, including but not limited to:

- purchase food
- purchase of a vehicle
- cell phones
- computer hardware and office equipment
- salaries and wages unrelated to the proposal
- indirect and overhead costs
- fringe benefits
- costs associated with preparing an application
- costs incurred prior to the award of a grant

3. DOCUMENT AND ADMINISTRATIVE REQUIREMENTS

The following documentation must be provided with the Application Form at the time of submittal.

3.2 Application Requirements

3.2.1 Registration and Pre-Qualification

New York State vendors must register in the Gateway and establish users in the system. To start this process, from the Grant Opportunity Portal (https://grantsgateway.ny.gov/IntelliGrants_NYSGG/module/nysgg/goportals.aspx), under

Registration, click “Request Access Now!” to view your options.

For existing NYS vendors, there is only one step. You must submit a Registration Form for Administrators identifying a Delegated Administrator responsible for managing your organization’s profile and users.

To find out if your organization has already registered, enter its SFS Vendor ID number and search. If your organization is registered, the search result will include contact information for its delegated administrator, and you can contact this individual to request access to the system. If your organization is not registered, the search result will provide a link to the Request Form for Administrator, which you will need to complete and submit pursuant to the instructions provided.

If your organization is not currently doing business with NYS, you will need to submit a Substitute W-9 Form to obtain a NYS SFS Vendor ID, in addition to the Registration Form for Administrators, in order to register.

All not-for-profit organizations that intend to submit a proposal in response to this RFP must also be pre-qualified prior to the submission of your proposal(s). If you have not pre-qualified with the Division of Budget by the time that you submit your proposal(s), each proposal you submit will be rejected and not considered for funding under this RFP. For more information regarding the pre-qualification process, please view [FAQs About Prequalification](#) as provided by the New York State Grants Reform Team.

If you have not yet registered (or, as a not-for-profit, prequalified), please do so immediately.

3.3 Workers’ Compensation & Disability Insurance

New York State Workers’ Compensation Law sections 57 and 220 require that the Department not enter into a contract unless proof of Workers’ Compensation and Disability Insurance in a form satisfactory to the New York State Workers’ Compensation Board has been secured.

Please refer to the Workers’ Compensation and Disability Insurance Requirements posted on the Department’s website, www.agriculture.ny.gov, under the heading of this RFP or visit the New York State Workers’ Compensation Board website, www.wcb.ny.gov, for more information. You may contact the Board’s Bureau of Compliance with any questions related to workers’ compensation or disability insurance at (866) 298-7830.

3.4 New York State Charities Bureau Registration

All not-for-profits organizations contracting with the State or serving as a fiscal agent must be registered with the New York State Charities Bureau, unless a proper exemption is obtained. All applicants must, therefore provide either:

- The organization's charitable registration number and written documentation from the Office of the Attorney General that the charitable organization is currently up-to-date with its Charities Registration; or
- A statement from the applicant that the organization is exempt pursuant to one of the

categories indicated on the Office of Attorney General's Request for Registration Exemption (Schedule E). The statement must identify the specific category under which the charitable organization is exempt.

To obtain written documentation of an organization's charities registration status, or if you have questions regarding the statutory requirements for registration, contact the New York State Office of the Attorney General, Bureau of Charities Registration, 120 Broadway, New York, NY 10271-0332, or call (212) 416-8402, email charities.bureau@oag.state.ny.us or visit their website at <http://www.oag.state.ny.us/bureaus/charities/charities.html>.

Eligible 501(c)(3) not-for-profit corporations acting as the applicant must have a New York State Attorney General Charities Bureau Registration number or an Exemption Certificate issued by the New York State Attorney General Charities Bureau explaining why the organization is exempt from registering with the Charities Bureau.

4. PROPOSAL FORMAT

4.1 Application Form

All proposals must be submitted online through the Grants Gateway. (<http://www.grantsreform.ny.gov/Grantees>)

1. Provide all information requested in the online Grants Gateway application form.
2. Attach all required attachments, drawings, photos, support letters, etc. at the end of the online Application.

The Department and State Comptroller's Office reserve the right to audit the applicant's books and records relating to the performance of the project during and up to six years after the completion of the project.

5. FUNDING CRITERIA

5.1 Evaluation Factors

All eligible proposals will be competitively rated by a panel designated by the Department. A total of one hundred (100) points can be achieved from the following criteria. The evaluation panel shall consider the following factors in rating proposals:

1. Reasonableness of cost relative to nature of work to be performed (maximum 20 points)
2. Is the project well described and are the main objectives defined? How well has the need of the school(s) or school districts been articulated? How well has the positive impact on New York State farmers and students been delineated? (20 points)
3. Have project benefits been quantified including but not limited to:
 - a. Projected number of New York producers to participate in the project
 - b. Projected pounds of locally produced farm products to be procured per school during the school year
 - c. Number of students served a school lunch and/or breakfast each school day (including free and reduced)
 - d. Projected increase in awareness of specialty crops by students
 - e. Projected number of producers, distributors and food hubs supplying locally produced farm products to schools
 - f. Projected increase in the varieties of locally produced farm products included in school meals programs
 - g. Projected number of school meals personnel trained in the procurement and preparation of locally produced specialty crops.
 - i. (20 points)

4. Do the key persons involved in the project have the requisite experience in operating a farm to school program, participating in school wellness committees, procuring locally produced farm products, fostering community partnerships and conducting outreach to local producers. (10 points)
5. How well defined is the plan of work? Is the project feasible and sustainable during and after the grant? Have the short term and long terms been defined along with specific benchmarks? (20 points)
6. Does the project have adequate support from the school/school district, community partners and farmers? Are the community partners and farmers specified? (10 points)

5.2 Geographic Distribution

After completing the above evaluation utilizing the Application Form and criteria set forth in it, an award up to a total of five (5) additional points per application may be given to help achieve geographic diversity for the Fresh Connect program. The following ten (10) regions will be used for this purpose:

Western New York: Allegany, Cattaraugus, Chautauqua, Erie, Niagara

Finger Lakes: Genesee, Livingston, Monroe, Ontario, Orleans, Seneca, Wayne, Wyoming, Yates

Southern Tier: Broome, Chemung, Chenango, Delaware, Schuyler, Steuben, Tioga, Tompkins

Central New York: Cayuga, Cortland, Madison, Onondaga, Oswego

Mohawk Valley: Fulton, Herkimer, Montgomery, Oneida, Otsego, Schoharie

North Country: Clinton, Essex, Franklin, Hamilton, Jefferson, Lewis, St. Lawrence

Capital Region: Albany, Columbia, Greene, Saratoga, Schenectady, Rensselaer, Warren, Washington

Mid-Hudson: Dutchess, Orange, Putnam, Rockland, Sullivan, Ulster, Westchester

New York City: Bronx, Kings, New York, Richmond, Queens

Long Island: Nassau, Suffolk

6. AWARD PROCESS

The Department will first screen applications to ensure that they meet eligibility requirements. All proposals deemed eligible by the Department will be evaluated by a Department panel according to the funding criteria; scores will be averaged and ranked in order from highest to lowest. Those proposals receiving the highest numerical scores above the threshold score (65), continuing until available funds are exhausted, or until all proposals are funded, whichever occurs first, will be funded.

A contract defining all terms and conditions and responsibilities of the successful applicant shall be developed by the Department subsequent to the awarding of funds. The contract will incorporate project details and a budget approved by the Department, among its provisions.

Upon agreement by the awardee and the Department to the provisions of the contract, it will be submitted for approval to the Attorney General of the State of New York and the Comptroller of the

State of New York.

7. REIMBURSEMENT FOR FUNDING

Once the contract is fully executed, grant funds will be disbursed on a reimbursement basis.

Awardees may request, at the discretion of the Department, an initial payment of up to twenty-five percent (25%) of the total grant award.

The Department shall retain ten percent (10%) of the budget amount to be disbursed to the contractor until such time as the final report is accepted.

A New York State Claim for Payment Form must be submitted to the Department in order for the contractor to be reimbursed for funds expended.

Payment to the contractor shall only be rendered electronically unless payment by paper check is expressly authorized by the Commissioner, at the Commissioner's sole discretion, due to extenuating circumstances. Such electronic payment shall be made in accordance with ordinary state procedures and practices. The Contractor shall comply with the State Comptroller of New York's procedures to authorize electronic payments. Contractor acknowledges that it will not receive payment on any Claim for Payment Form submitted under this agreement if it does not comply with the State Comptroller of New York's electronic payment procedures, except where the Commissioner has expressly authorized payment by paper check as set forth above.

8. REPORTING REQUIREMENTS

8.1 Monthly Reports

Awarded applicants will be required to submit brief monthly reports to the Department to provide timely information on the success of the project. A monthly report template will be provided by the Department and this template must be used to generate monthly reports. Reports must include a short summary of the project activities for that month, and other required facts and statistics relevant to the project, specified in the monthly report template. Claim for Payment Forms submitted will be withheld for projects that are not up to date with the filing of their monthly reports.

8.2 Reimbursement Request Reports

The Department will monitor contract performance. An interim progress report that summarizes work completed on the project shall accompany each Claim for Payment Form request for reimbursement of project expenses. The Department reserves the right to modify reporting requirements during the course of the project.

8.3 Final Report

A final report will be required within thirty (30) days following completion of the project. The final

report shall include a reasonably detailed description of the work completed; an assessment of the potential for future viability of the project; and a description of problems encountered, if any, which affected completion of the project. In addition to the final report, the Department reserves the right to conduct a follow-up survey of funded projects in order to determine long-term impacts.

9. LIABILITY

The Department shall not be held liable for any costs incurred by any party for work performed in the preparation of and production of a proposal or for any work performed prior to the formal execution of a contract.

10. NYS OFFICE OF PARKS, RECREATION & HISTORIC PRESERVATION REQUIREMENTS

Projects which include ground disturbing activities, construction of new buildings, or modification of buildings over 50 years old will be subject to further review by the NYS Office of Parks, Recreation and Historic Preservation (OPRHP). The Department reserves the right to request such additional information as is necessary to allow OPRHP to make a determination regarding the potential impacts of the project on historical sites or artifacts and possible alternatives which avoid or mitigate adverse impacts.

11. NYS ENVIRONMENTAL QUALITY REVIEW ACT REQUIREMENTS

Some projects may be subject to review under the New York State Environmental Quality Review Act (SEQRA). The Department reserves the right to request additional information as needed to comply with SEQRA requirements.

12. OTHER CONSIDERATIONS

The Department reserves the right to:

- reject any or all proposals received with respect to this RFP;
- waive or modify minor irregularities in proposals received after prior notification and concurrence of the applicant;
- utilize any or all ideas submitted in the proposals received unless those ideas are covered by legal patent or proprietary rights;
- request from an applicant additional information as deemed necessary to more fully evaluate its proposal;
- amend the program's specifications after their release, with appropriate written notice posted on the Department's website;
- select only certain portions of proposals for state funding;
- make all final decisions with respect to the amount of State funding and the timing of payments to be provided to an applicant; and
- negotiate the terms of the budget.

All proposals submitted in response to this RFP will become the property of the New York State Department of Agriculture and Markets.

13. FREEDOM OF INFORMATION

All proposals submitted and all related contracts and reports may be subject to disclosure under the Freedom of Information Law.

14. DEBRIEFING

Pursuant to section 163(9)(c) of the State Finance Law, an unsuccessful bidder has the right to a debriefing regarding the reasons its application was not selected for award. Upon request, the Department will provide a debriefing to any unsuccessful applicant as to the reasons that the proposal submitted was not selected for an award. To request a review of an unsuccessful application, contact Ms. Judy Giovannetti, Division of Fiscal Management, by phone at: (518) 457-6172 or via e-mail at judy.giovannetti@agriculture.ny.gov . A review should be requested by an unsuccessful applicant within thirty (30) days of the date of the notice that its proposal was not selected for an award.