



2017 Farm to School Program

Questions & Answers

*****Important***** This document has been amended to include this first question regarding submission of MWBE documentation.

Q: The RFP states that “All MWBE Forms and Instructions are included in the Submission Documents.” Where may I find these?

A: The Department has decided to remove the form titled “MWBE Utilization Plan” as a required proposal submission document. MWBE forms will be requested from awardees at the time that their award is announced.”

Q: Our organization has a green initiative program that grows food for our low income communities, and we also have an educational program for two counties with children ranging in age from 2 to five years old. Would we be eligible for this grant?

A: Per the terms of the RFP on page 2 under Section 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.

Q: I’m hoping you can tell me if there’s a match requirement for the 2017 Farm to School Competitive Grant Program? If so, what is it?

A: There is no match requirement for the 2017 Farm to School Program.

Q: We are interested in learning more about the RFP for funding to help schools increase their local food sourcing. Can you provide me with the content of the RFP, as well as any application guidelines?

A: You can find the paper copy version of the RFP here: <https://www.agriculture.ny.gov/RFPS.html>, but you must apply for the grant online at: <https://grantsgateway.ny.gov>.

Q: We are in receipt of the RFP, and want to be clear that we may apply for funding even if we were awarded a Farm to School grant in a prior year, and it is not yet completed?

A: Yes, your organization would be eligible to apply for the 2017 Farm to School grant, even though the prior year’s awarded Farm to School grant is not completed yet.

Q: What is the narrative page limit for this year’s Farm-to-School grant application? Is single spacing OK? What size and style font are acceptable?

A: All applicants to the Farm to School program for 2017 must apply online at <https://grantsgateway.ny.gov>. The Gateway determines the font size/style and spacing, and the character limit is 4,000 per question.

Q: It seems from the RFP like the Department has done away with the various application tracks (planning, training, implementation, etc.) this year. Is that correct? Can a school district apply for any eligible project idea/allowable use of funds?

A: The tasks outlined on page 8 of the RFP are merely suggestions on how you may go about meeting the objective.

Q: Is there a way to view the Grants Gateway questions before/without logging in?

A: The evaluation factors, and their points value are listed in the RFP, beginning on page 7 in section 4.1.

Q: I am unable to access the link – can you please forward a copy of the application and where the application is to be submitted?

A: I'm sorry you are having trouble with the link. You can try this link: <https://grantsgateway.ny.gov>. When you are on the home page, you click on search, and search by: Farm to School.

An electronic version of the RFP can be found on the Department's website here: <https://www.agriculture.ny.gov/RFPS.html>, but all applicants must apply for the grant online through the Grants Gateway.

Q: A group of us, including farmers, school officials and teachers, and faculty members at a SUNY school have been working on a program to partner local public schools (K-12) with local farms and designing programs where student learning applications and outcomes would be integrated into supervised farm activities. The overall goal is to bring students closer to their food and develop better nutritional habits, in addition to creating an applied learning environment. The program does not contain a traditional farm to school component, however, partially because of the limited kitchen facilities at the schools, although we did plan for a school CSA, where school staff and student would have access to fresh local produce and meat. My question is whether the effort would fall under the guidelines for your program?

A: Based on the information provided, it appears your project would be eligible under the 2017 Farm to School program.

Q: I was out of the office for a meeting during the webinar, and was wondering if you could send me the link to it?

A: The link for the 2017 Farm to School webinar can be found here: <https://www.agriculture.ny.gov/RFPS.html>.

Q: If you have any advice on putting together an application to hire a coordinator to help get more local fruits and/or vegetables from local farms to the school cafeteria, I would greatly appreciate it.

A: I am not permitted to give any general advice to an applicant, as it can be seen as giving someone an unfair advantage over others, but if you would like to email me with any specific questions, I can usually get you an answer within 24 to 48 hours. All questions become a part of the public record, and although we would answer any questions directly via email, all questions will be compiled into a PDF, and the final version posted to the Department's website by Thursday, October 26th. The last day I am permitted to answer any questions is Tuesday October 24, 2017, as long as they are received at the Department by 4:30 pm.

Q: What would be considered a reasonable cost for a farm to school coordinator?

A: You can find the link to the Department's press release on the 2016 Awards here: <http://www.governor.ny.gov/news/governor-cuomo-announces-awards-seven-farm-school-programs-benefit-nearly-300000-students>. Many of the awardees hired a Farm to School Coordinator. Contacting these organizations would allow you an opportunity to brainstorm about the best approach in calculating a reasonable cost for a Farm to School Coordinator.

Q: Would food processing equipment such as wash and peel machinery be eligible for this grant?

A: Yes, food processing equipment such as wash and peel machinery would be eligible under the terms of the RFP.

Q: Would centralized storage equipment like a walk-in cooler at a community kitchen be eligible?

A: Yes, Centralized storage equipment like a walk-in cooler at a community kitchen would be an eligible cost under the terms of the RFP.

Q: Can equipment purchased by the grant be loaned out or rented by for-profit entities? For example, could CCE own a piece of equipment that is actually used by a farmer at their farm?

A: Equipment purchased by a grantee may be "loaned" or "rented" out to a farmer for no fee, or a nominal fee to cover the cost of maintenance and transportation.

Q: Are public school districts required to register in Grants Gateway in order to apply for the Farm to School grant?

A: All organizations are required to register in the Grants Gateway, and if you are a not-for-profit, you must prequalify.

A public school district is considered a municipality, and therefore does not have to prequalify.

Q: Does the grant funding depend on free and reduced lunch participation? There is reference to need articulation with reference to quantitative data on free and reduced lunches.

A: The number of free and reduced lunches served is one of several criteria used to evaluate proposals.

Q: Can application be made for individual schools within the District, or must all schools be included in the program?

A: An application may be made for individual schools within a school district.

Q: Can you tell me if there is a required/minimum/cutoff level for the free and reduced lunch participation? And if so, what is that level? Is there somewhere I can find this and other applicable criteria information online?

A: There is no required minimum for the free and reduced lunch levels.

Q: Is the grant money restricted only to procurement activities?

A: No, the grant money is not restricted only to procurement activities. The objective of the program is to increase the volume and variety of local farm products procured by schools/districts for inclusion in school meals programs. You would need decide whether your objective is competitive with the objective of the Farm to School program.

Q: Does the two-year grant period begin on the award date listed (November 24, 2017)? Is it acceptable to use the spring of 2018 for planning with implementation of the project to commence in September of 2018?

A: The two-year grant period for the 2017 Farm to School Program will run January 1, 2018 – December 31, 2019. Should your organization be selected to receive a grant, as long as your project is completed by the end of 2019, you can use the Spring of 2018 for planning, with implementation of the project to commence in September 2018.

Q: We are wondering what qualifies as local produce. How far away can something be grown and still be considered local?

A: “Local” can be defined by you for your project, but should not extend beyond the borders of New York State.

Q: We have a significant sized lunch program and breakfast program, but would like to know if this award would be limited to the lunch program only?

A: Awards are not limited to the school lunch program.

Q: Are indirect costs allowed? They are not listed under the eligible costs or under the ineligible costs.

A: Indirect costs are not allowed.

Q: It says that the project must be completed within two years. Can projects be one year in duration? 1.5 years? Or should they be two years?

A: A contractor can take any or all of the time to complete the project – it is not required to be two years in duration.

Q: The district just sent out the Grants Gateway Registration Form yesterday...is there any way we will have access by next week?

A: Grants Gateway is very good about getting organizations registered within a day or so of receiving the administrator form. Once they have you registered, they will send you an email, which will give you a username and password to access the Gateway, and the application.

The Grants Gateway helpline is available to assist you with the status of your registration form, assigning different roles to individuals within your organization, and accessing the application until the deadline of Friday, November 3, 2017. They can be reached by calling 518.474.5595, or by emailing grantsgateway@its.ny.gov.

Q: Produce purchased from the farm cannot be included in expenses for the grant?

A: Produce purchased from the farm cannot be paid for with grant funds.

Q: Do I need to have the farm lined up already in order to apply?

A: One does not have to have a farm “lined up” to apply for the Farm to School grant.

Q: Can wages for Registered Dietician be a major part of the grant if it involves direct promotion of these local fruits and vegetables?

A: Wages for a registered dietician are an eligible expense for the Farm to School grant.

Q: We operate a three-season hoop house that produces fruits, vegetables, and herbs in quantities that could partially serve the NYSED 853c school kitchen on campus. We would like to add infrastructure that would allow the agency to meet DOH regulations to be able to utilize the produce from the gardens in the school cafeteria. We are not working with a “farm” per se, but we have a contracted certified herbalist who supports the operations of our various gardens around our agency. Does our program qualify for funding?

A: Yes, your project is eligible to submit a competitive proposal for funding.

Q: Our school district is thinking about partnering with other districts in the area to put in an application for a Farm to School coordinator. Would we be able to position our school as the lead applicant and provide documentation that details who will be partnering? Would we need to provide answers about all the partners in the application, and delineate between different districts in the project benefits section?

A: Your school district may be the lead applicant and partner with other districts for a project.

You should use your discretion when answering questions as to whether you should include all partners in each answer, or just your school district.