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## Farm to School Implementation Grant Program

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**Fiscal Year 2025 Request for Applications (RFA)**  
**Assistance Listing Number: 10.575**

**Release Date: October 28, 2024**

**Application Due Date: 11:59 pm, Eastern Standard Time (EST),  
January 10, 2025**

**Anticipated Award Date: July 2025**

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Form RFA 01-23

## Application Checklist

This Application Checklist provides applicants with a list of the required documents. However, FNS expects that applicants will read the entire RFA prior to the submission of their application and comply with all requirements outlined in the solicitation. The Application Checklist is for applicant use only and should not be submitted as part of the Application Package.

Complete the following **at least four weeks** prior to submission:

- Obtain a Unique Entity Identifier (UEI) number;
- Register the UEI number in the System for Award Management (SAM); and,
- Register in grants.gov.

When **preparing your application**, ensure:

- Application format and narrative meet the requirements included in [Section 4.1](#). This includes page limits, priorities outlined in [Section 1.5](#), and all necessary attachments.
- You are eligible to apply for a grant as described in [Section 3.0](#) “Eligibility Information.”
- The RFA is correctly indicated on the Farm to School Coversheet.
- Application format and narrative meet the requirements included in [Section 4.1](#). This includes page limits, priorities, and all necessary attachments.
- You include any required elements noted in the “Required Forms and Documents Checklist Below”.
- If applicable, you can complete the Optional Priority Group Declaration Checklist ([Appendix B](#)) and include it in the project narrative (not counted towards page limit) for additional bonus points when scoring.

When **preparing your budget**, ensure the following are included:

- The total funding amounts requested on the SF-424, SF-424A, and Budget Narrative are identical and do not exceed the maximum request amount.
- At least** a 25 percent cash or in-kind match is provided with a detailed description and signed commitment letter for ALL matching funds. Applicants failing to provide the match contribution documentation will be deemed ineligible and removed from further consideration.
- Indirect cost information (either a copy of a Negotiated Indirect Cost Rate Agreement (NICRA) or, a current NICRA is not in effect, they may charge up to 15% de minimis). If an applicant is requesting the de minimis rate or indirect costs are not required, please state this in the budget narrative.
- All staff that will be paid by this grant or hired to help support project activities are listed.
- The percentage of time the Project Director will devote to the project in full-time equivalents (FTEs).
- Your organization’s fringe benefit rate and amount, as well as the basis for the computation.
- The type of fringe benefits to be covered with Federal funds.
- Itemized travel expenses (including type of travel), travel justification, and basis for lodging estimate.
- Types of equipment and supplies, justifications, and estimates, ensuring that the budget is in line with the project description.
- Information for all contracts and justification for any sole-source contracts
- Justification, description, and an itemized list of all consultant services.

## REQUIRED FORMS AND DOCUMENTS CHECKLIST

When **submitting** your application, ensure you have submitted all of the following required forms and documents (unless specified as optional all items on the list below are required):

### Federal Grant Forms

- Farm to School Grant Program (FSGP) Coversheet (fillable PDF in Grants.gov)
- SF-424 – [Application for Federal Assistance](#) (fillable PDF in Grants.gov)
- SF-424A – [Budget Information and Instruction Form](#) (fillable PDF in Grants.gov)
- SF-424B – [Assurances for Non-Construction Programs](#) (fillable PDF in Grants.gov)
- SF-LLL – [Disclosure of Lobbying Activities](#)
- FNS-906 – Grant Program Accounting System and Financial Capability Questionnaire

### Project Application Checklist

- Project Narrative
- Activities/ Indicators Tracker
- Budget Narrative
- Match Letter(s) – A signed letter accounting for **every source** of matching funds, totaling a minimum 25 percent of the total project cost
- Letters of commitment from key staff and partners. Not to exceed the three-letter limit.
- If your organization does not operate the National School Lunch Program (NSLP), Child and Adult Care Food Program (CACFP), Summer Food Service Program (SFSP), and/or the School Breakfast Program (SBP), you must include at least one letter of commitment from a school, child care institution, or summer sponsor operating the NSLP, CACFP, SFSP, and/or the SBP, or from a State Agency administering NSLP, CACFP, SFSP, and/or the SBP. This letter does count towards the three-letter limit on letters of commitment.
- Up to three resumes of key staff
- 501(c)letter, if applicable (must document current status)

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# 1. Program Description and Objectives

## 1.1 Executive Summary

The Patrick Leahy Farm to School Grant Program is designed to increase the availability of local foods in schools and connect students to the sources of their food through education, taste tests, school gardens, field trips, and local food sourcing for school meals. Grants can launch new farm to school programs or expand existing efforts. The objective of the Fiscal Year (FY) 2025 Farm to School Implementation Grant is to improve access to local foods in eligible CNP sites through comprehensive farm to school programming that includes both local sourcing and agricultural education efforts. Project proposals should incorporate both elements of the required objective.

The Fiscal Year (FY) 2025 Farm to School Implementation Grant awards projects of 24 months in length for funding up to \$500,000. 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. Eligible applicants for the Implementation grant may include schools and other institutions that operate Child Nutrition Programs, Indian Tribal Organizations, agricultural producers or groups of agricultural producers, non-profit entities, and local agencies. Note that State agencies are not eligible for Farm to School Implementation Grants. Please see section 3 for additional details on eligibility.

This RFA is one of three funding opportunities being offered under the Patrick Leahy Farm to School Grant Program in FY 2025. Please see the RFA Grant Track Decision Document under the “Related Documents” tab for this opportunity in grants.gov for more information on the different grant types.

## 1.2 Legislative Authority

The Richard B. Russell National School Lunch Act (NSLA) (42 U.S.C. 1751 et seq.) establishes a Farm to School Program in order to assist eligible entities, through grants and technical assistance, in implementing farm to school programs that improve access to local foods in the USDA Food and Nutrition Service (FNS) Child Nutrition Programs (CNP), including the National School Lunch Program (NSLP), School Breakfast Program (SBP), Child and Adult Care Food Program (CACFP), and Summer Food Service Program (SFSP). Authorizing language in Section 18(g) of the NSLA (42 U.S.C 1769(g)) directs the Secretary of Agriculture to award competitive grants, designed to improve access to local foods in eligible schools, for activities such as:

- Training;
- Supporting operations;
- Planning;
- Purchasing equipment;
- Developing school gardens;
- Developing partnerships; and
- Implementing farm to school programs.

Each year \$5 million is provided to the Department of Agriculture (USDA) to support grants, technical assistance, and other activities related to USDA’s Farm to School Program. Additional funding for the Farm to School Program was made available from FY 2018 through FY 2024 agriculture appropriations acts and, as a result, USDA expects to award approximately \$12 million across three separate Farm to School Program grant award opportunities (Turnkey, State Agency, and Implementation). Approximately \$5 million is anticipated to be awarded under this

opportunity (i.e. the Farm to School Implementation Grant opportunity). The awarding of grants under this opportunity is subject to the availability of funding.

As mandated by the NSLA, grant projects selected for award are limited to no more than \$100,000. However, in recent years Congress provided authority for USDA to award grant projects of up to \$500,000, at their discretion. In anticipation of this authority being provided in the FY 2025, USDA will consider proposals of up to \$500,000 for Indian Tribal Organizations (ITOs) and Alaska Native Corporations (ANCs). Other eligible entities can apply for up to \$500,000 if their projects are Nationwide or Multi-State in scope, described in [Section 4.2](#) below. All other proposals are limited to \$100,000.

**Geographic Diversity and Equity:** The NSLA also directs the Secretary to ensure geographical diversity and equitable treatment of urban, rural, and tribal communities in the distribution of grant awards, as well as give the highest priority to funding projects as determined by the Secretary. Please refer to [section 5.2](#) for more information on priority points.

**Matching Support:** The NSLA also requires each Farm to School Grant recipient to provide matching support in the form of cash or in-kind contributions and agree to cooperate in an evaluation of the program carried out using grant funds. Please refer to [Section 3.3](#) for a discussion of matching and in-kind requirements.

### *1.3 What is Farm to School?*

While individual farm to school programs are shaped by their unique community, geographic region, and scope, the term ‘farm to school’ is generally understood to include efforts that connect schools with local or regional farmers, food processors, and manufacturers in order to serve locally or regionally procured foods in school cafeterias. Bringing more locally sourced, fresh fruits and vegetables into school cafeterias is a foundational activity of many farm to school efforts. Additionally, USDA considers farm to school to be inclusive of many types of producers, such as farmers, ranchers, and fishers, as well as many types of food businesses, including food processors, manufacturers, distributors, and other value-added operations. Farm to school also encompasses a variety of CNP meal-serving institutions, including schools, child care institutions, and summer sponsors and sites. These entities are broadly referred to as CNP operators or CNP sites in this RFA.

In addition to local sourcing activities, farm to school programs often include agriculture and nutrition-based educational efforts including standards-based curriculum and a whole host of hands-on experiential activities, such as school gardens, field trips to local farms, and cooking classes. To embed farm to school activities into school culture, promotion and outreach efforts often aim to keep farm to school activities front and center in both the school and broader community.

The potential impact of farm to school programs is significant. Farm to school programs are believed to strengthen children’s and communities’ knowledge about, and attitudes toward, agriculture, food, nutrition, and the environment; increase children’s consumption of fruits and vegetables; increase market opportunities for farmers, fishers, ranchers, food processors, and food manufacturers; and support economic development across numerous sectors.

### 1.4 Defining Local Sourcing and Local Foods

For the purposes of farm to school, USDA does not define “local.” Instead, CNP operators and applicants to this RFA may have varying definitions of “local” that align with their needs and goals. Local and regional food systems typically include the producing, processing, distributing, and marketing of foods within a specific geographic area. How a program operator defines “local” or “regional” – which are used interchangeably in this RFA – can depend on geographic, social, governmental, physical, or economic parameters, seasonality, and/or other factors. This definition is not all encompassing, as program operators may vary their definition of “local” or “regional” for specific foods or food groups to best align with what is available in their geographic area.

There are a variety of methods by which CNP operators may source local foods for service in their meal programs. The primary method is by purchasing or procuring foods from local producers, sometimes through intermediaries like distributors and food hubs, using allowable procurement methods. Program operators also source local foods by receiving donated foods from a variety of sources like school gardens, local producers, and local community organizations.

### 1.5 Funding Priorities (Bonus Scoring Points)

The FY 2025 Patrick Leahy Farm to School Implementation Grant Program takes a comprehensive approach to advancing equity for all in farm to school programming, including people of color and others who have been historically underserved, marginalized, and adversely affected by persistent poverty and inequality. To reflect this, the FY 2025 Farm to School Implementation Grant awards have incorporated equity through its scoring incentives (bonus points). Please see [section 5.2](#) for specific information.

### 1.6 Key Objectives

Below is the Program Objective for the FY 2025 Farm to School Implementation Grant. Applicants must propose activities which align with the objective below. Note that if awarded, grantees will be required to report progress on their proposed activities using the FNS-908 Performance Progress Report.

#	Objectives
Objective #1	Improve access to local foods in eligible CNP sites through comprehensive farm to school programming that includes local sourcing and agricultural education efforts.

## 2. Federal Award Information

### 2.1 Type of Federal Assistance

The following information is intended to provide applicants with information to help make informed decisions about proposal submissions.

- Total amount of funding that FNS expects to award: Approximately \$5 million
- Anticipated number of awards: 75
- Minimum award amount (award floor): \$50,000
- Maximum award amount (award ceiling): \$500,000\*
- Anticipated award announcement date: July 2025



- Anticipated period of performance (24 months): July 1, 2025 – June 30, 2027
- Application due date: January 10, 2025

\*USDA will consider proposals of up to \$500,000 for Indian Tribal Organizations (ITOs) and Alaska Native Corporations (ANCs). Other eligible entities can apply for up to \$500,000 if their projects are Nationwide or Multi-State in scope, described in [Section 4.2](#) below. All other proposals are limited to \$100,000.

Please note:

- Grant awards are subject to the availability of funding and/or appropriations of funds.
- FNS reserves the right to use the results of this funding opportunity and competition to award additional grants this year or the subsequent fiscal year, should additional funds become available.

## 2.2 Period of Performance

**The period of performance for the FY 2025 USDA Farm to School Implementation Grant will be 24 months and the start date for project activities cannot begin prior to July 1, 2025 and must end by June 30th, 2027.** However, a grantee might not need the entire 24 month grant period to complete their projects and may be allowed to close out early. All grant funds must be obligated, and all program activities under the grant (other than activities relating to the closeout of the grant) must be completed by the end of the period of performance. Therefore, applicants are expected to plan accordingly to achieve project deliverables within the award period.

## 2.3 Allowable Costs

To accomplish Farm to School Grant Program goals, grantees must ensure that the best use of the available funding is achieved. Expenditures and purchases need to contribute to an approved project activity. In approving grant or subgrant expenditures, a positive answer should always be sought to the following questions:

- Is the cost applicable to my grant and/or the subgrant's objectives?
- Is the cost allowable according to program cost principles?
- Is the cost reasonable, appropriate, and necessary?

Budgets may also include expenses related to personnel, contractors, equipment and supplies, meeting expenses (**other than meals**), travel, and trainings.

Please refer to the general guidance under the Cost Principles found in [2 CFR 200](#).

### Equipment and Supplies

Expenditures for both equipment (i.e., items of personal property having a useful life of more than one year and a cost of \$10,000 or more, such as walk-in freezers, coolers, processing equipment, hoop houses, salad bars, and ovens) and supplies (e.g., knives, cutting boards, gardening or farming implements, and food processors) are allowable expenses. Note that all equipment purchases require prior approval. FNS reserves the right to approve/disapprove these expenditures based upon the needs of the Agency and the proposed project.

Equipment and supplies purchased using Farm to School Grant Program funds must be used during the grant period for the sole purpose of accomplishing the stated project objective. If purchased equipment or supplies are not fully dedicated to the grant project objective, including beyond the grant period end date, the applicant must allocate the cost accordingly, i.e. determine

what percentage of the good's time or space will be dedicated to project activities. This percentage must then be applied to the value of the good to determine the amount of Federal funds that can be used to purchase said good. All equipment over \$10,000 have specific reporting and disposition requirements outlined at [2 CFR 200.313](#).

For example: Purchase of a large walk-in freezer that will store local foods for CNP site(s) but will also store food for the community food pantry.

- Walk-in freezer total cost: \$8,000
- 25 percent of freezer space used to store food that will be served in CNP site(s)
- $\$8,000 \times 25 \text{ percent} = \$2,000$  (amount of Federal funds that can be used to make this purchase)

### Greenhouses

Building a greenhouse may be an allowable use of Farm to School Grant funds. However, the grant funds cannot be not placed in the school food service account at any time. As with the Equipment and Supplies subcategory the applicant must determine what percentage of the greenhouse's time or space will be dedicated to project activities. This percentage must then be applied to the value of the good to determine the amount of Federal funds that can be used to purchase said good. All equipment over \$10,000 has additional reporting and disposition requirements. Awarded applicants must adhere to the requirements contained at [2 CFR 200.313](#).

### Food Expenses

**No more than 10 percent of the federal share of grant funds may be used for food purchases, and the use must be clearly delineated in the grant budget.** The goal of funded projects should be to make local food products available on menus long-term. **Food purchases should be limited to educational purposes only, such as farm to school sample tables, taste tests, or promotional use.** Food costs related to conducting a test offering of a new local or regional product are also deemed an appropriate use of funds. Any food purchase, as well as any expenditures associated with food purchases, must be clearly identified within the submitted budget narrative.

### Partnerships

Partners essential to the proposed project and partners contributing to project activities may require funding from USDA to participate in the proposed project. These funds may be included in applicant budgets as subgrantees or line-item contractors. Describe the specific services provided by the partner and provide a rationale for the partner(s) services and how these costs were calculated in both the Project Narrative and Budget Narrative.

### Evaluation

As proposals should include an evaluation component, costs associated with evaluation activities are allowed. The evaluation methods and measurement tools in the proposal must be appropriate for the grant objective.

### Promotional Items

The purchase of promotional items is allowed if they are directly related to the grant proposal's objective, and the need must be clearly described in the application. Any cost associated with such promotions must be reasonable in comparison to the grant funding. Individual items may not total more than \$5 dollars each. Promotional costs associated with advertising and public relations are unallowable. The term "advertising costs" means the costs of advertising media and corollary administrative costs. Advertising media include magazines, newspapers, radio and

television, direct mail, exhibits, and electronic or computer transmittals ([2 CFR 200.421 Advertising and Public Relations](#)).

#### **Staff Development and/or Substitute Pay**

Farm to School Implementation Grant funds may be used to hire substitute food service staff while school food service staff attend workshops and training related to the activities of the awarded grant. For accounting purposes, a record of who attended the session, how long it lasted, and the purpose of the session is required.

#### **Stipends**

Stipends may be an allowable expense, but the applicant should describe how they will be used and how the amount was determined. Please refer to [2 CFR 200.1](#) and [2 CFR 200.456](#), Participant Support Costs, for further information.

#### **Subgrants**

Applicants that award subgrants are expected to:

- Provide oversight to these subgrant recipients to ensure that expenditures authorized under the subgrants are allowable, allocable, and reasonable.
- Ensure that all expenditures are consistent with all local, State, and Federal policies, regulations, and procedures.
- Ensure that the expenditure does not exceed that which would be incurred by a prudent person under similar circumstances and would qualify as a sound business practice.
- Ensure that funds support the grant objective.
- Clearly describe their process for awarding subgrants in the project narrative, to include sub-grant objectives, allowable costs, and plans for management and oversight of sub-grants.

Please refer to 2 CFR 200 for complete information on requirements for subgrants, primarily [2 CFR 200.331](#) and [2 CFR 200.332](#).

#### **Travel**

Reimbursement for travel and hotel costs for project staff or participants to attend trainings and activities related to the grant is allowable. A clear oversight process must be in place to ensure the appropriate use of funds according to established travel allowances.

### ***2.4 Unallowable Costs***

All costs proposed in the budget and detailed in the budget narrative must be allowable, reasonable, necessary, and allocable. Refer to [2 CFR Part 200 Subpart E – Cost Principles](#) for a detailed description of all allowable and unallowable costs.

#### **Entertainment**

Costs of entertainment, including amusement, diversion, and social activities and any associated costs are unallowable (such as mascot costumes, etc.) unless there is a programmatic purpose and prior approval is granted by FNS.

#### **Meals or Snacks for Training or Meeting Attendees**

Meals and snacks for training or meeting attendees are not an allowable expense under this grant opportunity.

### **AmeriCorps and FoodCorps**

Because AmeriCorps and FoodCorps programs are federally funded programs, Farm to School Grant funds may not be used to pay for AmeriCorps/FoodCorps service member stipends or benefits, either directly or as matching funds. Additionally, service member time may not be used as match for a Farm to School Grant. However, service site fees that do not support service member stipends or benefits, or project activities conducted by AmeriCorps/FoodCorps programs, sites, and/or service members may be allowable grant costs. Applicants must confirm in their narrative that they are not requesting Farm to School grant funds for items or activities that are already funded with federal dollars.

### **Gift Cards**

Gift cards are not an allowable expense under this grant opportunity. For the purposes of this grant opportunity, “gift cards” refers to any token, voucher, ticket, certificate, or other item with cash value that serves as a substitute for cash.

### **Vehicles**

Purchasing a vehicle with grant funds is not an allowable cost. Applicants can consider leasing a vehicle or purchasing a trailer/attachment if there is a clear need for delivery of the grant project. Trailers and/or attachments are not permitted to be self-propelling (i.e., have an engine).

## **3. Eligibility Information**

### *3.1 Eligible Applicants*

Entities not meeting the eligibility definitions will be deemed ineligible and removed from competition without further consideration. The following are eligible entities for the FY 2025 Farm to School Implementation Grant, which are described in more detail below.

- Eligible schools, including non-profit private and charter schools, which operate the NSLP and/or SBP;
- Eligible child care institutions, including non-school based institutions that have an agreement with the State agency to operate CACFP;
- Eligible SFSP sponsors, including non-school based institutions that have an agreement with the State agency to operate SFSP;
- Local agencies;
- Indian Tribal Organizations and Alaska Native Corporations (ANCs);
- Agricultural producers; and
- Non-profit entities.

Entity type must be clearly indicated and unambiguous in all application materials. Applicants can only apply as one entity type. If an applicant can meet the criteria for more than one eligibility type, they should choose the entity type that best aligns with their organization. If USDA cannot determine the applicant to be an eligible entity based on information contained within the application, the applicant will be deemed ineligible and removed from competition without further consideration.

Additionally, applicants can only submit one application across the three FY 2025 Patrick Leahy Farm to School Grant solicitations (i.e. Implementation, Turnkey or State Agency). If multiple packages are submitted through Grants.gov by the same applicant to more than one FY 2025

Patrick Leahy Farm to School Grant solicitations ALL submissions will be removed from further consideration.

Finally, multiple applications from within the same entity will not be considered. For example, if both a school district and an individual school within the district apply, BOTH submissions will be removed from further consideration.

**Note:** In cases where an applicant is deemed nonresponsive for failing to submit required elements or documents associated with this RFA they will be considered ineligible and removed from consideration. Those applicants who fail to submit any required documents or forms will be deemed **NONRESPONSIVE** and therefore will be **INELIGIBLE** to participate in the competition and removed from further consideration.

**Eligible schools** are defined as schools (including private schools and charter schools) that participate in the NSLP, CACFP, or SFSP as authorized under the NSLA or the SBP established under Section 4 of the Child Nutrition Act of 1966. The applicant school and any other school(s) that comprise the primary focus of the grant project must have an agreement with the appropriate administering State agency to participate in the NSLP, CACFP, SFSP, and/or SBP, and must be in good standing. Where a school food authority (SFA) exists, the application must come from the SFA, and only one application per SFA is allowed. School districts should select “Eligible school” when completing the Farm to School Coversheet. FNS will not choose between different applications from the same entity to determine which should be forwarded for consideration. Schools that are NOT CNP operators are ineligible, even if supplying a CNP operator/administrator letter from a partnering entity.

**Eligible child care institutions** are defined as non-school based institutions that have an agreement with the State agency to operate CACFP. The applicant and any other institutions and site(s) that comprise the primary focus of the grant project must have an agreement with the appropriate administering State agency to participate in CACFP and must be in good standing. Note that individual day care homes are not eligible as lead applicants, based on the definition of “day care home” in 7 CFR 226.2, but a sponsoring organization may apply as the lead applicant for a project serving one or more day care homes it sponsors.

**Eligible summer sponsors** are defined as non-school based institutions that have an agreement with the State agency to operate SFSP. The applicant and any other sponsors and site(s) that comprise the primary focus of the grant project must have an agreement with the appropriate administering State agency to participate in SFSP and must be in good standing.

**Local agencies** are any unit of government within a State, including but not limited to a county, borough, municipality, city, town, township, parish, special district, or council of governments. Note: For the purposes of this RFA, school districts, SFAs, and other institutions operating CNPs are not considered local agencies and should select “eligible school,” “eligible child care institution,” or “eligible summer institution” on the Farm to School coversheet, as appropriate.

**Indian Tribal Organizations (ITOs) and Alaska Native Corporations (ANCs)** include:

- An Indian tribe, band, or group recognized by the Department of the Interior; an intertribal council or group which is an authorized representative of Indian tribes, bands, or groups recognized by the Department of the Interior and which has an ongoing relationship with such tribes, bands, or groups for other purposes and has contracted with them to

administer a Federal CNP located in an eligible school; and tribal entities recognized as charitable under Section 7871 of the Internal Revenue Code (<https://www.irs.gov/government-entities/indian-tribal-governments/irc-section-7871treatment-of-indian-tribes-as-states>).

- Alaska Native Corporation (ANC) means any Regional Corporation, Village Corporation, Urban Corporation, or Group Corporation organized under the laws of the State of Alaska in accordance with the Alaska Native Claims Settlement Act, as amended (43 U.S.C. 1601, et seq.) and which is considered a minority and economically disadvantaged concern under the criteria at 43 U.S.C. 1626(e)(1). This definition also includes ANC direct and indirect subsidiary corporations, joint ventures, and partnerships that meet the requirements of 43 U.S.C. 1626(e)(2).

**Agricultural producers** are defined as any individual or entity that produces an agricultural commodity or agricultural food product. Please note that agricultural producers are not limited to those producing fruits, vegetables, or grains, but also include fishers, ranchers, and those raising other livestock for consumption. For the purposes of this Grant Program, an eligible agricultural producer is any individual or entity who operates a small-to medium-sized farm. A small-to medium-sized farm is any place from which up to \$1 million (gross) of agricultural products were produced and sold, or normally would have been sold, during the previous calendar year. Alternatively, a small-to medium-sized farm is any place with land acreage measuring less than 1,582 acres that produced and sold, or normally would have sold agricultural products.

**Groups of agricultural producers** are defined as cooperatives, food hubs, or non-profit membership organizations that represent independent producers whose mission includes working on behalf of independent producers and the majority of whose membership and board of directors is comprised of independent producers representing eligible agricultural producers. Groups of agricultural producers must represent small-to medium-sized agricultural producers as their primary stakeholders.

**Non-profit entities** are defined as any corporation, trust, association, cooperative, or other organization which: (1) is operated primarily for scientific, educational, service, charitable, or similar purposes in the public interest; (2) is not organized primarily for profit; and (3) uses its net proceeds to maintain, improve, and/or expand its operations. For the purposes of this Grant Program, non-profit entities are required to have 501(c) status. **If a non-profit entity operates a CNP, they should select “eligible school,” “eligible child care institution,” or “eligible summer institution,” as appropriate, on the application coversheet rather than selecting “non-profit entity.”** For the purposes of this Farm to School Grant Program, the term “non-profit entity” excludes colleges and universities, college and university foundations, cooperative extension services, hospitals, hospital foundations, and State, local, and Federally recognized Indian tribal governments. Applicants applying under this entity type must provide documentation of their 501(c) status. Note that schools are not eligible to apply as non-profit entities.

### 3.1.1 Eligible Child Nutrition Programs

If a proposal seeks to target a specific school(s) or site(s), the school(s) or site(s) must participate in one or more of the CNPs (e.g., NSLP, CACFP, SFSP, and/or SBP).

### 3.1.2 Current and Former Farm to School Grantee Eligibility

Organizations which received Implementation grants through the USDA Patrick Leahy Farm to School Grant Program in the last three funding cycles (FY 2022 – FY 2024) are **ineligible** to apply for an FY 2025 Farm to School Implementation grant.

Other current or former Farm to School grantees (which meet the eligibility requirements of this opportunity) may apply for a FY 2025 Farm to School Implementation Grant provided that they will have passed the performance period end date of the earlier grant (as documented on their most recent fully executed FNS-529) by the close date (i.e. January 10, 2025).

To be considered for a FY 2025 Farm to School Implementation grant, all entities in receipt of any existing or prior year Farm to School grant must have submitted all required deliverables by January 10, 2025. Grant deliverables include all progress and financial status reports and an Action Plan, if applicable.

No statement in this RFA supersedes the terms and conditions of a previously awarded grant with respect to the final due date of any deliverables. Submitting all required deliverables, including reports and, if applicable, an Action Plan, is an independent requirement for applicants to the FY 2025 Farm to School Grant Program, regardless of the year of the prior award. FNS strongly advises past grantees interested in applying for the FY 2025 Farm to School Implementation grant to contact FNS well in advance of the application deadline to ensure they have completed all grant requirements for their past grant. See [Section 7.0](#) for the appropriate point of contact for questions about this solicitation.

### 3.2 Ineligible Applicants

Any entities that do not fall into one of the categories described in Section 3.1 are ineligible for this grant. However, the following additional details are included to address ineligible entity types that have applied for this grant in prior cycles.

Applicants identified as any of the entity types described below will have their application removed from competition without further consideration. Please note that the list below is not a comprehensive list of all ineligible entity types. This section is provided as a resource to address frequently asked questions which FNS often receives from one or more of the entity types described below.

**Individuals**, such as individual parents or teachers, are ineligible for the Patrick Leahy Farm to School Grant Program.

**Institutions of higher education**, including colleges and universities, are ineligible for the Patrick Leahy Farm to School Grant Program. Note that for the purposes of this RFA, Indian Tribal Colleges and university foundations are considered institutions of higher education and are not eligible as the lead applicant. **Institutions of higher education are ineligible regardless of 501(c) status.** Institutions of higher education can be key partners.

**Hospitals**, as defined by [2 CFR 200.1](#) "Hospital" are ineligible for the Patrick Leahy Farm to School Grant Program. Note that for the purposes of this RFA, hospital foundations are considered ineligible entities and are not eligible as the lead applicant. **Hospitals and hospital foundations are ineligible regardless of 501(c) status.** Hospitals and hospital foundations can be key partners.

**Cooperative extension services** are ineligible for a Patrick Leahy Farm to School grant. Cooperative extension service is defined by USDA National Institute of Food and Agriculture as “a nationwide, non-credit educational network that addresses public needs by providing non-formal higher education and learning activities to farmers, ranchers, communities, youth and families throughout the nation.” Cooperative extension services are ineligible regardless of 501(c) status. Cooperative extension services can be key partners.

**State agencies** are ineligible for the FY 2025 Farm to School Implementation grant. State agencies are eligible for the FY 2025 Farm to School State Agency grant, which is captured under a separate funding opportunity. State agencies are any statewide government agency that administers or works in partnership with the agency that administers the Federal CNPs (e.g., Office of Public Instruction, Department of Education, Department of Agriculture, Department of Health, etc.).

### 3.3 Cost Sharing or Matching Considerations

Federal funds must constitute no more than 75 percent of the total project budget. Applicants may not use any federal funds as the source of any part of their match. The grant recipient must show evidence of matching support of at least 25 percent of the total budget in the form of cash or in-kind contributions, including facilities, equipment, or services provided by State and local governments, non-profit organizations, and private sources as defined in The Richard B. Russell NSLA (42 U.S.C. 1751 et seq.). **Applications that fail to provide evidence of matching support of at least 25 percent of the total budget will result in a nonresponsive determination and be removed from consideration for award. This evidence must be in the form of a match letter, described below.** Please note that FNS will not round up to 25% if the applicant proposes a match percentage below 25%. For example, applicants proposing a 24.99% match will be deemed ineligible and removed from consideration

Federal Funds (no more than 75 percent of total) + Match funds (no less than 25 percent of total) = Project total. For a \$100,000 grant, the minimum match required is \$33,334. The below examples show the breakdown of two example match calculations.

<b>Sample Match A</b>	<b>Amount</b>
Grant Request:	\$100,000
Match Amount:	\$33,334
Total Project Cost:	\$133,334
Match Percent:	25 percent (match ÷ total project cost)
USDA Percent:	75 percent (grant request ÷ total project cost)

<b>Sample Match B</b>	<b>Amount</b>
Grant Request:	\$50,000
Match Amount:	\$16,667
Total Project Cost:	\$66,667
Match Percent:	25 percent (match ÷ total project cost)
USDA Percent:	75 percent (grant request ÷ total project cost)

**In-kind contributions** are generally defined as the value of goods or services provided by a third-party for the benefit of the Grant Program, where no funds transferred hands. Applicants may not use Federal funds of any kind, including Federal non-profit school food service account funds, as a



match for this Grant Program. The host agency contribution to support AmeriCorps and FoodCorps service member stipends is unallowable as a match because both AmeriCorps and FoodCorps are federally funded programs. The match contributions reflected in the submitted grant proposal must be documented, including the basis for the value determination, as well as be reasonable, allocable, and allowable under the criteria for this grant award.

**Matching funds** may be in the form of allowable direct or indirect costs. For example, the value of buildings and/or property are unallowable costs for the Farm to School Grant, and therefore unallowable as a source of matching funds. The property values associated with land or buildings are not permitted as match.

Additional information about allowable and unallowable costs is available in [Sections 2.3](#) and [Section 2.4](#). The basis for determining the value of cash and in-kind contributions must be in accordance with [2 CFR 200.306](#).

**Match Letters:** All applicants are required to submit signed letters verifying matching funds for each and every cash and/or in-kind resource including applicants whose budgets indicate a match from their own organization. **Match letters are considered separate from letters of commitment** described in [Section 3.3](#), and match letters are not subject to the three-document limit that applies to letters of commitment. An applicant must include a signed letter verifying matching funds for every cash and/or in-kind match source included in the budget.

- **What to include:** Each match letter must include the source, exact dollar amount, and description of how the match was calculated. The match letter must include the source of matching funds, even if the match is cash supplied from within the applicant’s own organization.
  - Match letters that do not include the specific dollar amount, how the calculation was derived, and the source of funds will be deemed insufficient and removed from consideration.
  - Match letters may be addressed to “Erica Antonson, Acting Branch Chief, Grants Management Operations Branch.”

Insufficient match documentation is a frequent reason for removal from the competition (e.g. amounts in match letters do not align with the amounts in the SF-424 and budget narrative). Please ensure all match documentation provided carefully follows the instructions.

**Maintaining Written Records:** If awarded, the grantee must maintain written records to support all allowable costs claimed as being a match contribution, as well as costs paid by the Federal Government. In the event the grantee does not provide the minimum amount of cost share, as described in the budget and budget narrative, the Government’s contribution will be reduced in proportion to the grantee’s contribution. These requirements will be described in more detail in the Terms and Conditions provided upon award.

### *3.4 Pre-Award Screening Requirements*

In reviewing applications in any discretionary grant competition, the FNS review of risk posed by applicants will be based on the following:

- SAM.gov, the System for Award Management, the Official U.S. Government system that consolidated the capabilities of CCR/FedReg, ORCA, and EPLS

- FAPIIS, the Federal Awardee Performance and Integrity Information System that has been established to track contractor misconduct and performance
- FNS Risk Assessment Questionnaire.

Applicants must complete the *FNS-906 Grant Program Accounting System and Financial Capability Questionnaire* that allows FNS to evaluate aspects of the applicant’s financial stability, quality of management systems, and history of performance, reports, and findings from audits. The questionnaire contains questions that may be an indicator of potential risk.

The evaluation of the information obtained from the designated systems and the risk assessment questionnaire may result in FNS imposing special conditions or additional oversight requirements that correspond to the degree of risk assessed. If you have an audit in the past five years, please include your audit report as an attachment.

## 4. Application and Submission Information

### 4.1 Content and Form of Application Submission

#### 4.1.1 Special Instructions

- Letters of commitment must be submitted with the application through Grants.gov. Letters submitted via email will not be considered.
- FNS reserves the right to request clarification on any application submitted in response to this solicitation.
- Applications not submitted via Grants.gov will not be considered.
- If multiple application packages are submitted through Grants.gov by the same applicant in response to this opportunity, FNS will accept the latest application package successfully submitted. All other packages submitted by the applicant will be removed from this competition.
- **If multiple packages are submitted through Grants.gov by the same applicant to multiple FY 2025 Patrick Leahy Farm to School Grant opportunities (i.e. Implementation, Turnkey, or State Agency) ALL submissions will be removed from consideration.**
- Late application submissions will not be considered in this competition. FNS will not consider additions or revisions to applications unless they are submitted via Grants.gov by the deadline. No additions or revisions will be accepted after the deadline.

#### 4.1.2 Required Elements and Formatting

FNS strongly encourages eligible applicants interested in applying to this program to adhere to the following application format. The proposed project narrative, budget narrative, and supporting documents should be presented on 8 ½-inch x 11-inch white pages with at least 1-inch margins on the top and bottom. All pages should be single-spaced in Times New Roman 12-point font, except for the budget narrative and Activities/Indicators Tracker, which may be no smaller than 10-point. All pages, excluding form pages, must be numbered.

**All applications, unless otherwise noted, should meet the following formatting guidelines:**

- **Table of contents:** (not counted towards page limit) The Table of Contents should include relevant sections, subsections, and associated page numbers.
- **Project Narrative:** Five-page maximum length project narrative in total, which includes the following three sections:
  - Project Description

- Organizational Experience and Management
  - Evaluation and Sustainability
- The Project Narrative page restrictions apply only to the content of the narrative proposals and do not apply to other required forms/attachments, nor to the budget-related documents. Pages exceeding the stated page limits will be omitted during the review process. Applications that do not include required narratives will be removed from consideration.
- **Activities/Indicators Tracker:** Three-page maximum length (does not count towards the five-page limit for the project narrative). Formatting the table in landscape orientation rather than portrait orientation is acceptable, but the three-page maximum length still applies.
- **Resume of key staff:** One-page maximum length for each. If a key position has not been filled, a job description which includes desired knowledge, skills, and education. Up to **three** resumes may be submitted and will be reviewed for consideration. Any additional resumes will not be considered.
- **Match Letter:** One-Page maximum length for each. Each match letter must include the source, exact dollar amount, and description of how the match was calculated. The match letter must include the source of matching funds, even if the match is cash supplied from within the applicant’s own organization.
  - There is no limit on the number of match letters applicants may include, and applicants must include a match letter for every source of match funds. Failure to include one or more match letters is a common reason for removal from the competition.
- **Letter of commitment:** All applicants may submit up to three letters of commitment from key partners identified in the project plan or budget. Applicants may submit fewer than three letters of commitment, but applications which do not include any letters of commitment may be subject to a reduced score in the review process. No more than three letters of commitment will be considered.
  - Letters of commitment should be written in size 12-point Times New Roman font using standardized letter formatting and are not to exceed one page. Letters may be addressed to “Erica Antonson, Acting Branch Chief, Grants Management Operations Branch.”
  - **Letters must include a description of the partner’s:**
    - Overall support of the project;
    - Role and responsibility in achieving the proposed project; and
    - Demonstrated experience or expertise with executing the assigned role/responsibility.
    - Evidence of existing community support or partnerships with entities that will be involved in the execution of the project, including organizations that will receive funding from or provide a match for the project. Potential partners may include, but are not limited to: key food service personnel (e.g., school nutrition directors), school administration (e.g., superintendent, principal, etc.), teachers, producers, ranchers, fishers, distributors providing local food for the school nutrition programs or educational enrichment, or other key organizations (e.g., cooperative extension, rural development centers, etc.).
  - **If an applicant does not operate the NSLP, CACFP, SFSP, and/or the SBP, the applicant** must include at least one letter of commitment from a school, child care

institution, or summer sponsor operating the NSLP, CACFP, SFSP, and/or SBP, or from a State Agency administering NSLP, CACFP, SFSP, and/or the SBP. This letter does count toward the three-letter limit.

- Letters of commitment must be attached to the Grants.gov application package using the “Add attachments” button. Letters of commitment will not be accepted outside the Grants.gov web portal. Please note that letters of commitment are a separate and distinct requirement from match letters, which are required for every source of matching funds. Please see [Section 3.3](#) for more information on match letters.
- **Budget narrative:** There is no page limit on the budget narrative, and it does not count toward the page limit for any other section. A suggested budget narrative template is available in [Appendix C](#) of the RFA, which applicants are **strongly encouraged** to use for completing the budget narrative section of their application. If the budget narrative is created in a spreadsheet, please “print to PDF” before submitting to preserve formatting and ensure it fits on the standard page size.

**Information provided beyond the page limit will not be considered. Applications that do not follow guidelines may be subject to a reduced score during review.**

#### **4.1.3 FSGP Coversheet**

The FSGP coversheet includes the following information:

- Name of organization
- Grant application type (grant track)
- Type of eligible entity
- Length of project (select only 24 months)
- Brief project description (1000 characters including spaces maximum)
- CNP operator information (or scope if specific CNP operators have not been identified, maximum 2000 characters). For each CNP site/operator that is participating in the project provide the following:
  - Name of CNP operator
  - State
  - Type
  - Free or reduced price eligibility percentage
  - Total enrollment
  - Urban/rural classification code

## **4.2 Grant Activities**

### **4.2.1 Grant Activities**

Proposed FY 2025 Farm to School Implementation grant activities must support the required objective, **improve access to local foods in eligible CNP sites through comprehensive farm to school programming that includes both local sourcing and agricultural education efforts.**

Examples of activities that could be supported by FY 2025 Farm to School Implementation grants include, but are not limited to, the following:

#### **Local Sourcing**

- Incorporating more unprocessed and value-added, minimally processed, locally or regionally sourced meal components into the cafeteria program meals;

- Expanding farm to school programs beyond the NSLP to incorporate bringing local products into the SBP, SFSP, and/or CACFP;
- Readyng producers to participate in the school food market by providing training on procurement regulations, Good Agricultural Practices (GAP), and other food safety-related topics;
- Improving infrastructure to accommodate new local ingredients or local menu items;
- Developing recipes that incorporate local products;
- Working with a food producer or manufacturer to minimally process or develop a value-added product that uses one or more locally sourced food products for use in program meals;
- Solving distribution bottlenecks that limit the feasibility of sourcing more locally or regionally produced items by working closely with intermediaries (e.g., distributors, food hubs) or developing business relationships between farmer(s), CNP operators, intermediaries, and other local food businesses;
- Developing, implementing, or enhancing local food procurement tracking systems; and
- Developing databases of local producers or local food purchase ordering systems.

#### **Agricultural Education**

- Integrating agricultural education with career and technical preparation programs to encourage the next generation of agricultural producers;
- Expanding experiential learning opportunities, such as creation of school gardens, developing school-based farmers markets, providing support to ag/food clubs, and/or increasing exposure to local farms and on-farm activities;
- Encouraging increased consumption of fruits and vegetables through promotional activities, taste tests, and other activities featuring local products; and
- Encouraging the sharing of indigenous traditional knowledge between generations, such as native plant varieties and planting practices; Teaching and researching sustainable growing practices to mitigate and adapt to the changing climate, such as encouraging the use of drought resistant plant varieties and/or cover crops; and
- Developing and implementing integrated curriculum to reinforce food and nutrition-based learning throughout the school environment or on a local farm(s).

#### **Combining Both Local Sourcing and Agricultural Education**

- Conducting a State or regional farm to school institute;
- Operating service projects that support farm to school initiatives in eligible CNP sites;
- Incorporating food justice, food sovereignty, youth empowerment, or other related efforts into farm to school programming;
- Providing technical support in the form of face-to-face trainings, consultations, webinars, etc.; and
- Developing promotional campaigns in support of farm to school initiatives.

Summaries of past grantee projects are available at <https://www.fns.usda.gov/f2s/grant/awards> that may serve as additional examples.

#### **4.2.2 Required Travel for Training and Networking**

If awarded, all grantees must attend at least one national- or regional-level networking and training event in the first year of their grant. The event must have a farm to CNP focus. Examples may include, but are not limited to, events hosted by organizations such as National Farm to

School Network, National Agriculture in the Classroom, Ecotrust, Intertribal Agriculture Council, American Horticultural Society, or Farm to Institution New England. Networking and stakeholder engagement are major components of this activity; consequently, grantees will be expected to travel to and attend the event in-person. To ensure that grantees reserve sufficient funding to attend an in-person meeting, grant applicants should:

- Include in the budget travel costs for at least one project representative, preferably the project director, to attend the event. There is no limit on how many project personnel may attend, but the amount requested for this activity must be reasonable and align with the scope and intent of the project.
- Estimate how many days of travel attendance at the event will require, including hotel, airfare, ground transportation, meals/per diem, etc. Include any registration fee, if known or expected.

Include travel for this meeting in the first year of the grant only. Travel costs for the event of choice are permitted as both Federal and non-Federal contributions to the grant, if not otherwise unallowable. Applicants are strongly encouraged to put this activity in the Federal portion of the proposed budget.

#### **4.2.3 National and Multi-State Scope Projects**

As noted earlier in this RFA, applicants who are not ITOs or ANCs, are limited to up to \$100,000 per award unless their project proposal is National or Multi-State in scope. For the purposes of this RFA, a national or multi-State project proposes a widespread statewide reach or impact in at least two States. For example, a farm to school institute that recruits participants from across five States, where the recruitment process supports multiple participants from anywhere within the five target States, could qualify as a multi-State project. However, a project targeting five specific schools, one in each of five States, would not qualify for multi-State consideration because the scope is too narrow, even though the project proposes activities in more than two States. The applicant must make a convincing case through their proposal narrative, letters of commitment, and other supporting materials, that the project both satisfies the multi-State or national scope requirement and that a funding amount greater than \$100,000 is justified.

### **4.3 Application Content**

#### **4.3.1 Project Narrative**

Farm to School Implementation grant applicants must organize their applications according to the requirements in this section. This project narrative must not exceed five pages and it must include the following three sections:

1. Project Description
2. Organizational Experience and Management
3. Evaluation and Sustainability

#### **Project Description**

Provide an overview of the proposed project and describe how your project will increase access to local foods in eligible CNP sites, how your project will generate sourcing and purchasing from local and regional producers, and how your project will increase access to agriculture education. Describe how the project has or will seek and consider feedback from the community being served in the design and delivery of the project. Ensure that any specific activities mentioned in this

section are reflected in the Activities/Indicators Tracker. Where dates are included, activities should not begin before July 1, 2025. If an applicant proposes to use grant funding to award subgrants, the applicant must include a description of the process for making subgrant awards and describe how equitable distribution of the subgrants will be ensured. Identify the community and organization(s) participating in your project. Describe the need for the project, how that need was identified, and explain how the specific proposed project is designed to address or meet the need.

Describe how the project team includes leadership and members from the community served by the project. Describe how the project team reflects the community served and ensures that the values, cultures, and needs of the community are represented. Describe the strengths of the community that make this the right time and place for your project, such as prior experience planning and implementing farm to school initiatives (such as local sourcing and agriculture education) that would demonstrate that your organization has the background necessary to successfully execute the proposed project.

### Organizational Experience and Management

Describe the management approach for staffing, procurement of contractors (as applicable), quality assurance planning, tracking timelines, and progress monitoring that will be used for the project. Describe your plan for coordination, data sharing, and reporting among members of the project team and stakeholder groups. Provide a clear description of staff or partners' relevant experience as it relates to the proposed project. Include sufficient information to demonstrate the staff/organization has the ability to execute the project.

**NOTE:** Attach resumes of key project staff and letters of commitment from key partners to your grant application within Grants.gov using the "Add Attachments" button under SF-424 item #15. If a key position has not been filled, a job description no more than one page in length, which includes desired knowledge, skills, and education may be included in the application in lieu of a resume. Please note that there is a limit of three resumes and three letters of commitment per grant application. Please see [Section 4.0](#) for more information.

### Evaluation and Sustainability

Briefly describe your organization's ability to monitor project activities and how the overall impact will be evaluated. Detail any relevant experience your organization or partner has conducting evaluations. Describe how the project will collect feedback from the participating community in conducting the evaluation.

Describe the evaluation activities you will conduct to measure your program against the required objective. Identify the indicator(s) that will be used for each activity. Indicate the date and frequency of the proposed activities. Lastly, identify a person or organization responsible for overseeing the evaluation activities. Depending on whether an activity addresses local sourcing, agricultural education, or both, the Evaluation and Sustainability section should reflect evaluation activities that measure related outcomes.

For more information on evaluation resources, please see the Farm to School Applicant Resource webpage at:

<https://www.fns.usda.gov/farmentoschool/resources-farm-school-grant-program-applicants>

Describe how the project will continue beyond the period of performance (without additional USDA Farm to School grant funds). Identify how farm to school initiatives will be integrated into your organization's operations. Indicate which project components will require continued funding and identify potential sources of such funding (e.g., other grants, in-kind donations, volunteers, integration into organization's long-term budget, etc.). Discuss partners' and staff's roles in continuing farm to school efforts past the grant period, including how access to local foods will be sustained, such as making local foods available on program menus.

#### **4.3.2 Activities/Indicators Tracker**

Implementation applicants must organize their activities in an Activities/Indicators tracker. This section must not exceed three pages. Applicants must list the activities, activity category, indicators, start and completion dates, and responsible parties. Applicants are required to develop an Activities/Indicators Tracker that identifies specific activities that the grantee will pursue to complete the project proposed in the narrative. Activities shall not begin before July 1, 2025, and must not extend beyond the proposed period of performance end date. A suggested template will be provided on the related documents tab on Grants.gov.

The Activities/Indicators Tracker must contain the following columns, clearly labeled and in the following order: "Activity", "Activity Category", "Indicators", "Anticipated Start Date (Month, Year)", "Anticipated Completion Date (Month, Year)", and "Responsible Party (Name, Title, Organization)." Additional columns will not be considered. Please note that activities and indicators must align with the objective identified in [Section 1.6](#) and, if awarded, grantees will be required to report on **all** activities and indicators proposed in their application using the FNS-908 Performance Progress Report provided by FNS. Carefully considering proposed activities and indicators will prepare grantees for their progress reporting requirements if awarded. See [Section 6.0](#) for more information about reporting.

Indicators are defined as any metric you anticipate will be able to be tracked during the period of performance of the grant. Common examples include Number of People Attended, Number of People Impacted, Number of Conferences Delivered, Number of Materials Created, Number of Trainings, Number of People Trained. Please select indicators that are relevant for the activity and are feasible to collect during the grant performance period.

The following indicators are required of Implementation grantees and must be included in the Activities/Indicators Tracker aligned with relevant activities:

- Number of CACFP students (age 0 – pre-k) impacted
- Number of primary students (grades k-5) impacted
- Number of secondary students (grades 6-12) impacted
- Number of collaborating CACFP (age 0 – pre-k) sites
- Number of collaborating primary (grades k-5) CNP sites
- Number of collaborating secondary (grades 6-12) CNP sites
- Number of partner organizations
- Types of partner organizations
- Dollar value of local foods purchased by product type: fruit, vegetables, fluid milk, other dairy, protein, grains (including baked goods), other

A sample table is provided below. Please note that the sample table includes examples of activities. Should an applicant copy and paste the table from this RFA into their application, all



example activities must be removed before an application is submitted. Please include in the table any activities mentioned in the Project Narrative and ensure that the information in the table matches the information provided in the narrative. Formatting the table in landscape orientation rather than portrait orientation is acceptable, but the same three-page limit still applies.

In the “Activity Category” column, please indicate whether the Activity on the same row relates to local sourcing, agricultural education, or both. **Please do not enter any additional information in the “Activity Category” cell. Please do not create any other activity categories.**

#### 4.2.4 Sample Activities/ Indicators Tracker

Objective: improve access to local foods in eligible CNP sites through comprehensive farm to school programming that includes local sourcing and agricultural education efforts. Please see the Related Documents tab for this opportunity on grants.gov for fillable version of this tracker.

Activity (Repeat table headings if table extends to multiple pages)	Activity Category	Indicator(s)	Anticipated Start Date (Month, Year)	Anticipated Completion Date (Month, Year)	Responsible Party (Name, Title, Organization)
Attend at least one national or regional-level networking and training event.	Required (this is the only required activity. Do not enter this for any other row)	Number attended	Sept. 2025	Sept. 2025	Project Manager
Example: Recruit and convene a local foods student/staff advisory committee	Enter “Local Sourcing,” “Agricultural Education,” or “Both.”  Example: Local Sourcing	Example: Number of primary students (grades k-5) impacted  Number staff attended	Example: Oct. 2025	Example: June 2026	Example: Jessica Plum, Registered Dietitian, Food and Nutrition Service Department
Example: Deliver training to five farm to school teams, representing multiple States, in a regional farm to school institute.	Enter “Local Sourcing,” “Agricultural Education,” or “Both.”  Example: Local Sourcing	Example: Number staff trained  Dollar amount of local foods purchased by product type: fruit, vegetables, fluid milk, other dairy, protein, grains (including baked goods), other (please specify)	Example: June 2026	Example: July 2026	Example: Sam Cooke, Director, Example Non-profit, Inc.

<b>Example:</b> Convene an education and school garden committee that identifies areas for potential curriculum integration, project goals, roles and responsibilities, timeline, budget, and funding strategy	Enter “Local Sourcing,” “Agricultural Education,” or “Both.”  Example: <b>Agricultural Education</b>	Example <b>Number of secondary students (grades 6-12) impacted</b>  <b>Number staff attended</b>	Example: <b>Sept. 2025</b>	Example: <b>June 2026</b>	Example: <b>Ms. Green, Elementary Science Coordinator, ABC School District</b>
<b>Example:</b> Install ten raised beds to expand school garden	Enter “Local Sourcing,” “Agricultural Education,” or “Both.”  Example: <b>Agricultural Education</b>	Example: <b>Number of gardens completed</b>	Example: <b>March 2025</b>	Example: <b>April 2026</b>	Example: <b>Mr. Williams, Head Custodian, ABC Elementary</b>

**4.4 Application Budget Narrative**

The budget narrative, formatted as a table, should correspond with the proposed project narrative and application budget. The narrative must justify and support the needs of the budget’s direct cost. The budget and budget narrative must be in line with the proposed project description. If the budget includes indirect costs, the applicant must provide a copy of its most recently approved Federal indirect cost rate agreement. Budget categories in this table must match those listed on the SF-424A form. If the budget table is created in a spreadsheet, it must be formatted to fit on an 8.5 x 11-inch page, with a font no smaller than 11-point Times New Roman. All funding requests must be in whole dollars.

**4.4.1. Indirect Cost Rate**

A current NICRA, negotiated with a cognizant Federal agency, should be used to charge indirect costs. Indirect costs may not exceed the negotiated rate. If a NICRA is used, the percentage and base should be indicated. If the applicant does not have, and has never been approved for, a NICRA, they may charge up to 15 percent *de minimis*. In this instance, the applicant must indicate they are requesting the *de minimis* rate. An applicant may elect not to charge indirect costs and instead use all grant funds for direct costs. If indirect costs are not charged, the phrase “none requested” should be stated in the budget narrative. For questions related to the indirect cost rate, please work with the Grant Officer as noted in [Section 7.0](#) of this RFA.

**4.4.2 Funding Restrictions**

No pre-award or pre-agreement costs incurred prior to the effective start date are allowed.

## 4.5 Required Grant Application Forms

The required Grants.gov forms are located at: [grants.gov/web/grants/forms/forms-repository.html](https://www.grants.gov/web/grants/forms/forms-repository.html)

- Farm to School Coversheet
- Non-Construction Grant Projects Forms: SF-424 Family
  - Application and Instruction for Federal Assistance (SF-424)
  - Budget Information and Instructions (SF-424A)
  - Assurance-Non-Construction Programs (SF-424B)
- SF LLL (Disclosure of Lobbying Activities)
  - Indicate on your form whether your organization intends to conduct lobbying activities. If your organization does not intend to lobby, write “Not Applicable” in boxes required to be completed.
- FNS-906 (Grant Program Accounting System and Financial Capability Questionnaire)
- Additional Required Information
  - Unique Entity Identifier (UEI) number. Please see section 1 below for further information
  - SAM registration. Please see section 2 below for further information.

## 4.6 Submission Date

Complete grant applications must be uploaded to [grants.gov](https://www.grants.gov) and submitted by 11:59 PM EST on January 10, 2025.

- Applications must be submitted via Grants.gov. Mailed, emailed, or hand-delivered application packages will not be accepted. For further instructions, see the “[Preparing for Electronic Application Submission through Grants.gov](#)” below.
- Late or incomplete applications will not be considered.
- FNS will not consider additions or revisions to applications unless they are submitted via Grants.gov by the deadline. No additions or revisions will be accepted after the deadline.
- If multiple application packages are submitted through Grants.gov by the same applicant in response to this solicitation, FNS will accept the latest application package successfully submitted. All other packages submitted by the applicant will be removed from this competition.
- Those applicants who fail to submit any required documents or forms as listed in [section 4.0](#) may be deemed NONRESPONSIVE, and therefore will be INELIGIBLE to participate in the competition and removed from further consideration.

FNS strongly encourages applicants to begin the registration process at least **four weeks** before the due date and to submit applications to Grants.gov at least **one week** before the deadline to allow time to troubleshoot any issues should they arise. Please note that upon submission, Grants.gov may send multiple confirmation notices. Applicants should ensure receipt of confirmation that the application was **accepted**.

**FNS will not accept applications outside of Grants.gov.** Applicants experiencing difficulty submitting applications through grants.gov should contact applicant support via the toll-free number 1-800-518-4726 and email at [support@grants.gov](mailto:support@grants.gov). This service is available 24/7.

### 4.6.1 Preparing for Electronic Application Submission through Grants.gov

Applicants must register with [Grants.gov](https://www.grants.gov) and [SAM.gov](https://www.sam.gov) in order to submit an application to FNS via Grants.gov as required.

In order to submit an application, you must:

### 1. Obtain a UEI Number

- What is a Unique Entity Identifier (UEI)?
  - A UEI is a unique number assigned to all entities (public and private companies, individuals, institutions, or organizations) who register to do business with the federal government. For more information, visit the [U.S. General Services Administration website](#).
- Where do I go to learn more about the UEI?
  - The U.S. General Services Administration [Unique Entity Identifier Update page](#) contains the most up-to-date information about the UEI. For additional information on the UEI process, please visit [SAM.gov](#).

### 2. Register in the System for Award Management (SAM)

- To register, you must have your organization's UEI, the organization's Tax ID Number (TIN), and taxpayer name (as it appears on the last tax return). It may take up to 5 to 7 business days or more to register and/or complete the migration of permissions and/or the renewal of an entity record.
- All applicants must have current SAM status at the time of application submission and throughout the duration of a Federal Award in accordance with [2 CFR Part 25](#).
- FNS strongly encourages applicants to begin this process at least 4 weeks before the due date of the grant solicitation.

### 3. Create a Grants.gov Account

- The next step in the registration process is to create an account with Grants.gov. Applicants must know their organization's UEI to complete this process. <https://www.grants.gov/applicants/applicant-registration>

#### 4.6.2 How to Submit an Application via Grants.gov

Applicants can apply online using *Workspace* within Grants.gov. *Workspace* is a shared, online environment where members of a grant team may simultaneously access and edit different web forms within an application. For additional training resources, including video tutorials, visit: [grants.gov/web/grants/applicants/applicant-training.html](https://www.grants.gov/web/grants/applicants/applicant-training.html). Applicant Support: Grants.gov provides applicants 24/7 support via the toll-free number 1-800-518-4726 and email at [support@grants.gov](mailto:support@grants.gov).

For programmatic and financial-related questions regarding this specific grant opportunity, please contact the Grant Officer noted in [Section 7.0](#) – Federal Awarding Agency Contacts of this RFA.

#### **NOTICE: Special Characters and Naming Conventions**

All applicants **must** follow Grants.gov guidance on file naming conventions. To avoid submission issues, please follow the guidance provided by Grants.gov (per the Grants.gov Frequently Asked Questions or FAQ).

*Are there restrictions on file names for any attachment I include with my application package?*

File attachment names longer than approximately 50 characters can cause problems processing packages. Please limit file attachment names. Also, do not use any special characters (e.g., ! @ #

\$ % ^ & \* - ' ). This includes periods (.) and spacing followed by a dash in the file. To separate words in naming a file, use underscore (\_). For example, Attached\_File.pdf.

**If these guidelines for file names are not followed, your application will be rejected. FNS will not accept any application rejected from the Ggrants.gov portal due to incorrect naming conventions.**

Additional information can be found at <https://www.grants.gov/applicants/applicant-faqs#attachments>

#### **4.6.3 Grants.gov Receipt Requirements and Proof of Timely Submission**

All applications must be received by 11:59 PM ET on the due date listed on the cover page. Proof of timely submission is automatically recorded by Grants.gov. An electronic date/time stamp is generated within the system when the application is successfully received by Grants.gov. The applicant Authorized Organization Representative (AOR) will receive an acknowledgement of receipt and a tracking number (e.g., GRANTXXXXXXXX) from Grants.gov with the successful transmission of their application. Applicant AORs will also receive the official date/time stamp and a Grants.gov tracking number in an email serving as proof of their timely submission. Applications received by Grants.gov after the established due date for the program will be considered late and will not be considered for FNS funding.

## **5. Application Review Information**

### *5.1 Review Criteria*

FNS will pre-screen all applications to ensure the applicants are eligible entities and compliant with all Program regulations. FNS will not approve any waivers from Program regulations for any projects submitted in response to this solicitation.

### *5.2 Evaluation Factors and Criteria*

The following evaluation criteria will be used to evaluate applications for this RFA.

#### **5.2.1 Scoring for Implementation Grant Applications (100 points)**

##### **Project Narrative (50 points)**

- Applicant describes the overall project and how the project activities achieve the required objective. Applicant emphasizes how the project will increase access to local foods, increase sourcing from local and regional producers, and increase access to agriculture education.
- Applicant clearly indicates the required objective and explains how it connects to the need of the target population.
- Applicant describes how the project has incorporated or will incorporate input from the community being served in the design and delivery of the project. Applicant includes relevant data describing how the need was identified and the status of farm to school initiatives within the participant population and/or organization.
- Applicant includes leadership and members from the community being served and ensures that the values, cultures, and needs of the community are represented in the design and delivery of the project.

- Evidence of previous experience with farm to school exists that would support successful execution of proposed project. If the applicant has limited or no farm to school experience, the application describes conditions or resources in place to support the launch of farm to school activities.
- Applicant included resumes of relevant key staff and the qualifications of the staff involved with the proposed project and/or organizational leadership reflect the expertise necessary to carry out the proposed project. If a key position has not been filled, a job description no more than one page in length, which includes required knowledge, skills, and education has been included in the application in lieu of a resume. No more than three resumes should be submitted.
- The level of staff allocation is appropriate for program execution and program evaluation.
- Roles and responsibilities among staff are clearly outlined.
- (If applicable) The CNP operator letter demonstrates appropriate involvement in the project activities.
- The application clearly identifies one or more specific CNPs (i.e. NSLP, SBP, CACFP, SFSP, or any combination), including in the narrative and supporting documents.
- Letters of commitment demonstrate appropriate involvement of partners.
- The applicant clearly describes how the program will continue beyond grant period of performance, including future roles of staff and/or partners to continue key activities without this grant funding.
- Applicant demonstrates the financial sustainability of the project by identifying key activities that require additional sources of funding and specifying those potential sources of funding (e.g., other grants, in-kind donations, volunteers, integration into organization's long-term budget).
- The applicant includes a variety of strategies, such as policy, systems, and environmental changes, to ensure long-term viability and discusses partner and staff roles in continuing farm to school efforts past the grant period.
- The applicant describes how they will sustain access to local foods, such as making local foods available on program menus.

#### Activities/Indicators Tracker and Evaluation (30 points)

- Activities in the table clearly align with the required objective.
- The Activities/Indicators Tracker aligns with the information in the rest of the Project Narrative.
- The Activities/Indicators Tracker specifies both local sourcing and agricultural education activities.
- Activities do not begin prior to July 1, 2025, and are completed within the two-year period of performance. Required activities are included. Overall, the timeline is realistic.
- All required indicators are included. Any additional indicators provided by the applicant are specific, measurable, achievable, relevant, and time bound, and are associated with a specific activity.
- The project narrative clearly describes the ability of the organization to monitor activities and conduct evaluations.
- The applicant identifies relevant indicators that will help measure progress.
- The project narrative describes how activities will be monitored, how progress will be measured, and at what frequency activities will occur.

- The project narrative clearly outlines roles and responsibilities for monitoring and evaluating activities (e.g., contractors, designating a current staff member, etc.)
- Proposed objective, activities, indicators, and timeline are all in alignment with one another.
- The Activities/Indicators Tracker is formatted correctly, including six columns with the same headers in the same order as the instructions and example provided in [Section 4.2](#) and only one activity on each row. Overall, the table is readable.

#### Budget (20 points)

- The total funding amount requested is appropriate for the scope of the project.
- Proposed costs are reasonable, necessary, and allocable to carry out the project's goals and objectives.
- Budget narrative includes a line-item description for allowable costs at an appropriate level of details and shows how the costs support the project goals. If applicable, justification is provided for key partners receiving a portion of grant funding to execute essential services.
- Applicant includes the calculation that shows how each line-item expense was derived. Budget calculations are itemized sufficiently to clearly show how the budget components were developed and costs estimated.
- Budget narrative and project narrative align with one another; there should be no items in the budget narrative that are not discussed in the project narrative.

#### Bonus Points (10 points in total)

The FY 2025 Patrick Leahy Farm to School Grant Program takes a comprehensive approach to advancing equity for all in farm to school programming, including people of color and others who have been historically underserved, marginalized, and adversely affected by persistent poverty and inequality. To reflect this, the FY 2025 Farm to School Grant awards will offer up to 10 priority scoring incentives (bonus points) to applications satisfying the priorities below.

**Applicants must submit the Priority Group Declaration Checklist, found in Appendix B, to receive these bonus points.** If USDA is unable to verify information declared on the Priority Group Declaration Checklist, the applicant will not be eligible to receive bonus points. Note that the Priority Group Declaration Checklist:

- Does not count towards the narrative page limit.
- Must be easily identifiable within the application.
- Should be included as its own page or as a separate attachment to ensure full credit.

The priorities are grouped into two categories:

#### Racial Equity Priorities (7 points available)

- Applications from ITOs, ANCs, or an entity led and/or staffed by American Indians and Alaska Natives and serving American Indian and Alaska Native communities.
- Applications from organizations led and/or staffed by Black/African Americans and serving Black/African American communities.
- Applications from organizations led and/or staffed by people of color and serving communities of color (defined as Black/African American, American Indian, Alaskan Native, Hispanic/Latino, Asian, and/or Pacific Islander).

### Organization Type Priorities (3 points available)

- Applications that serve a high proportion of children (at least 40 percent or more) who are eligible for free or reduced-price meals.
- Applications from small-to medium-sized agricultural producers or groups of small- to medium-sized agricultural producers. Please refer to the specific eligibility criteria in Section 3.0 for the definition of an eligible small-to medium-sized agricultural producer.
- Projects operating in and serving eligible CNP sites located in rural areas. For the purposes of Farm to School Grants, rural is defined as an area where the school or site participating in the project is located in the attendance boundary of a school or in a location with a locality code of 41, 42, or 43 using the National Center for Education Statistics online tool to determine urban/rural classification, as described in Appendix A.

**Total Points Available:** 110

### 5.3 Review and Selection Process

Following the initial screening process, FNS will assemble a panel of individuals to review and determine the technical merits of each application. The panel will evaluate the proposals based on how well they address the required application components and array the applications from highest to lowest score. The panel members will recommend applications for consideration for a grant award based on rank order, supported by the evaluation scoring. The Selecting Official reserves the right to accept the panel's recommendation or to select an application for funding out of order to meet agency priorities or geographical diversity.

FNS reserves the right to use this RFA and competition to award additional grants in the next fiscal year should additional funds be made available.

**Note:** If a discrepancy exists between the total funding request (submitted on SF-424, SF-424A, and budget or budget narrative) within the application package in response to this solicitation, FNS will **only** consider and evaluate the estimated funding request contained on the SF-424. Requesting an ineligible funding amount (e.g., above the maximum request amount) is a frequent reason for removal from the competition. Ensuring that the request amounts on your official paperwork generally, and SF-424 specifically, are correct is critically important.

## 6. Federal Award Administration Information

### 6.1 Federal Award Notice

The Government is not obligated to make any award as a result of this RFA. Unless an applicant receives a signed award document with terms and conditions, any contact from a FNS Grants or Program Officer should not be considered as a notice of a grant award. No pre-award or pre-agreement costs incurred prior to the effective start date are allowed unless approved and stated on FNS' signed award document (FNS-529). Only the recognized FNS authorized signature can bind the USDA, Food and Nutrition Service to the expenditure of funds related to an award's approved budget.



## **6.2 Administrative and National Policy Requirements**

### **6.2.1 Confidentiality of an Application**

When an application results in an award, it becomes a part of the record of FNS transactions, available to the public upon specific request. Information that the Secretary determines to be of a confidential, privileged, or proprietary nature will be held in confidence to the extent permitted by law. Therefore, any information that the applicant wishes to have considered as confidential, privileged, or proprietary should be clearly marked within the application. Any application that does not result in an award will be not released to the public. An application may be withdrawn at any time prior to the final action thereon.

### **6.2.2 Safeguarding Personally Identifiable Information**

“Personally identifiable information” means information that can be used to distinguish or trace an individual’s identity, either alone or when combined with other information that is linked or linkable to a specific individual (OMB Circular A-130, Managing Information as a Strategic Resource).

Applicants submitting applications in response to this RFA must recognize that confidentiality of PII and other sensitive data is of paramount importance to the USDA Food and Nutrition Service. All federal and non-federal employees (e.g., contractors, affiliates, or partners) working for or on behalf of FNS are required to acknowledge understanding of their responsibilities and accountability for using and protecting PII in accordance with applicable law, regulation, and policy [e.g., the Privacy Act of 1974; Office of Management and Budget (OMB) Memorandum, M-17-12, Preparing for and Responding to a Breach of Personally Identifiable Information; OMB Circular A-130, Managing Information as a Strategic Resource (this is a non-exhaustive list of requirements in this area)].

By submitting an application in response to this RFA, applicants are assuring that all data exchanges conducted throughout the application submission and pre-award process (and during the performance of the grant, if awarded) will be conducted in a manner consistent with applicable Federal laws, regulations, and policies. By submitting a grant application, applicants agree to take all necessary steps to protect PII, including the following: (1) ensuring that PII and sensitive data developed, obtained or otherwise associated with USDA FNS funded grants is securely transmitted; (2) ensuring that PII is not transmitted to unauthorized users, and that PII and other sensitive data is not submitted via email; (3) data is transmitted via FNS approved file sharing services or encrypted mobile media storage devices; and (4) ensuring that PII is encrypted and password protected both in transit and at rest.

### **6.2.3 Conflict of Interest and Confidentiality of the Review Process**

The agency requires all panel reviewers to sign a conflict of interest and confidentiality form to prevent any actual or perceived conflicts of interest that may affect the application review and evaluation process. Names of applicants, including States and tribal governments, submitting an application will be kept confidential, except to those involved in the review process, to the extent permitted by law. In addition, the identities of the reviewers will remain confidential throughout the entire process. Therefore, the names of the reviewers will not be released to applicants.

## 6.3 Administrative Regulations

### 6.3.1 Federal Tax Liabilities Restrictions

None of the funds made available by this or any other Act may be used to enter into a contract, memorandum of understanding, or cooperative agreement with, make a grant to, or provide a loan or loan guarantee to, any corporation that has any unpaid Federal tax liability that has been assessed, for which all judicial and administrative remedies have been exhausted or have lapsed, and that is not being paid in a timely manner pursuant to an agreement with the authority responsible for collecting the tax liability, where the awarding agency is aware of the unpaid tax liability, unless a Federal agency has considered suspension or debarment of the corporation and has made a determination that this further action is not necessary to protect the interests of the Government.

### 6.3.2 Felony Crime Conviction Restrictions

None of the funds made available by this or any other Act may be used to enter into a contract, memorandum of understanding, or cooperative agreement with, make a grant to, or provide a loan or loan guarantee to, any corporation that was convicted of a felony criminal violation under any Federal law within the preceding 24 months, where the awarding agency is aware of the conviction, unless a Federal agency has considered suspension or debarment of the corporation and has made a determination that this further action is not necessary to protect the interests of the Government

### 6.3.3 Debarment and Suspension 2 CFR Part 180 and 2 CFR Part 417

A recipient chosen for an award shall comply with Executive Orders (E.O.) 12549 and 12689, “Debarment and Suspension,” codified at [2 CFR Part 180](#) and [2 CFR Part 417](#). This common rule restricts sub-awards and contracts with certain parties that are debarred, suspended or otherwise excluded from or ineligible for participation in Federal assistance programs or activities.

### 6.3.4 Universal Identifier and Central Contractor Registration 2 CFR Part 25

Requirement for System for Award Management. Unless you are exempted from this requirement under [2 CFR 25.110](#), you as the recipient must maintain current information in the SAM. This includes information on your immediate and highest-level owner and subsidiaries, as well as on all of your predecessors that have been awarded a Federal contract or Federal financial assistance within the last three years, if applicable, until you submit the final financial report required under this Federal award or receive the final payment, whichever is later. This requires that you review and update the information at least annually after the initial registration, and more frequently if required by changes in your information or another Federal award term.

Requirement for Unique Entity Identifier: If you are authorized to make subawards under this Federal award, you:

- Must notify potential subrecipients that no entity (see definition in paragraph C of this award term) may receive a subaward from you until the entity has provided its Unique Entity Identifier to you.
- May not make a subaward to an entity unless the entity has provided its Unique Entity Identifier to you. Subrecipients are not required to obtain an active SAM registration, but must obtain a Unique Entity Identifier

### **6.3.5 Reporting Sub-award and Executive Compensation Information 2 CFR Part 170**

The Federal Funding Accountability and Transparency Act (FFATA) of 2006 (Public Law 109–282), as amended by Section 6202 of Public Law 110–252, requires primary grantees of Federal grants and cooperative agreements to report information on sub-grantee obligations and executive compensation. FFATA promotes open government by enhancing the Federal Government’s accountability for its stewardship of public resources. This is accomplished by making Government information, particularly information on Federal spending, accessible to the general public.

Primary grantees, including State agencies, are required to report actions taken on or after October 1, 2010, that obligates **\$30,000 or more** in Federal grant funds to first- tier sub-grantees. This information must be reported in the Government-wide FFATA Sub-Award Reporting System (FSRS). In order to access FSRS a current SAM registration is required. A primary grantee and first-tier sub-grantees must also report total compensation for each of its five most-highly compensated executives. Every primary and first-tier grantee must obtain a UEI prior to being eligible to receive a grant or sub-grant award. Additional information will be provided to grant recipients upon award.

### **6.3.6 Duncan Hunter National Defense Authorization Act of Fiscal Year 2009, Public Law 110-417**

Section 872 of this Act requires the development and maintenance of a Federal Government information system that contains specific information on the integrity and performance of covered Federal agency contractors and grantees. The Federal Awardee Performance and Integrity Information System (FAPIIS) is designed to address these requirements. FAPIIS contains integrity and performance information from the Contractor Performance Assessment Reporting System, information from SAM.gov, and suspension and debarment information from the SAM. FNS will review and consider any information about the applicant reflected in FAPIIS when making a judgment about whether an applicant is qualified to receive an award.

### **6.3.7 Freedom of Information Act (FOIA) Requests**

Application packages submitted in response to this grant solicitation may be subject to The Freedom of Information ACT (FOIA), 5 U.S.C. 552, by requests by interested parties. In response to these requests, FNS will comply with all applicable laws and regulations, including departmental regulations.

FNS will forward a Business Submitter Notice to the requested applicant’s point-of-contact. Applicants will need to review requested materials and submit and submit any recommendations within 10 days from the date of FNS notification. FNS will redact Personally Identifiable Information (PII).

For additional information on the Freedom of Information (FOIA) process, please contact the FNS Freedom of Information Act officer at [FOIA@usda.gov](mailto:FOIA@usda.gov).

### **6.3.8 USDA Non-Discrimination Statement**

In accordance with Federal civil rights law and U.S. Department of Agriculture (USDA) civil rights regulations and policies, the USDA, its Agencies, offices, and employees, and institutions participating in or administering USDA programs are prohibited from discriminating based on race, color, national origin, religion, sex, gender identity (including gender expression), sexual orientation, disability, age, marital status, family/parental status, income derived from a public assistance program, political beliefs, or reprisal or retaliation for prior civil rights activity, in any

program or activity conducted or funded by USDA (not all bases apply to all programs). Remedies and complaint filing deadlines vary by program or incident.

Persons with disabilities who require alternative means of communication for program information (e.g., Braille, large print, audiotope, American Sign Language, etc.) should contact the responsible Agency or USDA's TARGET Center at (202) 720-2600 (voice and TTY) or contact USDA through the Federal Relay Service at (800) 877-8339. Additionally, program information may be made available in languages other than English.

To file a program discrimination complaint, complete the USDA Program Discrimination Complaint Form, AD-3027, found online at [How to File a Program Discrimination Complaint](#) and at any USDA office or write a letter addressed to USDA and provide in the letter all of the information requested in the form. To request a copy of the complaint form, call (866) 632-9992. Submit your completed form or letter to USDA by: (1) mail: U.S. Department of Agriculture, Office of the Assistant Secretary for Civil Rights, 1400 Independence Avenue, SW, Washington, D.C. 20250-9410; (2) fax: (202) 690-7442; or (3) email: [program.intake@usda.gov](mailto:program.intake@usda.gov).

USDA is an equal opportunity provider, employer, and lender.

### **6.3.9 Privacy Policy**

The USDA Food and Nutrition Service does not collect any personal identifiable information without explicit consent. To view USDA's Privacy Policy, visit: [usda.gov/privacy-policy](https://usda.gov/privacy-policy).

## **6.4 Code of Federal Regulations and Other Government Requirements**

This grant will be awarded and administered in accordance with the following regulations 2 Code of Federal Regulations (CFR), Subtitle A, Chapter II. Any Federal laws, regulations, or USDA directives released after this RFA is posted will be implemented as instructed.

### **6.4.1 Government-wide Regulations**

- [2 CFR Part 25](#): “Universal Identifier and System for Award Management”
- [2 CFR Part 170](#): “Reporting Sub-award and Executive Compensation Information”
- [2 CFR Part 175](#): “Award Term for Trafficking in Persons”
- [2 CFR Part 180](#): “OMB Guidelines to Agencies on Government-wide Debarment and Suspension (Non-Procurement)”
- [2 CFR Part 200](#): “Uniform Administrative Requirements, Cost Principles, and Audit Requirements for Federal Awards”
- [2 CFR Part 400](#): USDA’s implementing regulation of 2 CFR Part 200 “Uniform Administrative Requirements, Cost Principles, and Audit Requirements for Federal Awards”
- [2 CFR Part 415](#): USDA “General Program Administrative Regulations”
- [2 CFR Part 416](#): USDA “General Program Administrative Regulations for Grants and Cooperative Agreements to State and Local Governments”
- [2 CFR Part 417](#): USDA “Non-Procurement Debarment and Suspension”
- [2 CFR Part 418](#): USDA “New Restrictions on Lobbying”
- [2 CFR Part 421](#): USDA “Requirements for Drug-Free Workplace (Financial Assistance)”
- [7 CRR Part 16](#): “Equal Opportunity for Religious Organizations”
- [41 U.S.C. Section 22](#): “Interest of Member of Congress”
- Freedom of Information Act (FOIA). Public access to Federal Financial Assistance records shall not be limited, except when such records must be kept confidential and would have

been excepted from disclosure pursuant to the “Freedom of Information” regulation (5 U.S.C. 552)

General Terms and Conditions (T&Cs) of FNS grant awards may be obtained electronically in advance of an award. For a copy of T&Cs, please contact the Grant Officer noted in the **Agency Contacts** ([Section 7.0](#)– Federal Awarding Agency Contacts of this RFA).

## 6.5 Reporting Requirements

### 6.5.1 Financial Reports

The award recipient will be required to enter the SF-425 (Federal Financial Report) into the FNS Food Program Reporting System (FPRS) on a quarterly basis.

### 6.5.2 Performance Progress Reports (PPR)

Grantees will be required to submit progress reports to FNS 30 days following the end of each semi-annual period, using the FNS-908 PPR form that will be sent to grantees at the time of award or the initial orientation. The reports should cover the preceding period of activity. A final report identifying the accomplishments and results of the project will be due 120 days after the end date of the award.

**Please note:** The FNS-908 PPR form specific to this opportunity will be sent to grantees at the time of award or the initial orientation. Use of the FNS-908 PPR form for progress reports is required. Previous grantees that have not submitted reports timely will be evaluated as high risk. All activities reported on the FNS-908 must align with the required objective(s) from the “Key Objectives” Section above. Please ensure your organization has software capable of opening and completing a PDF with fillable form fields.

As noted in [Section 4.2](#), if awarded, grantees will be required to report on all activities proposed in their application using the FNS-908 PPR. All activities reported on the FNS-908 must align with the required objective from [Section 1.6](#). Carefully considering proposed activities and indicators will prepare grantees for their progress reporting requirements if awarded.

### 6.5.3 Evaluation and Impact

As per authorizing language, as a condition of receiving a grant, grant recipients shall agree to cooperate in an evaluation of the program carried out using grant funds. Upon selection of grant awardees, USDA will provide further guidance and direction regarding evaluation protocols and common indicators. Applicants should expect that evaluation protocols will include both process evaluations (qualitative and quantitative indicators of progress toward the objectives, accomplishment of activities) and outcome evaluations (to determine whether the objectives were met and what impact they had). Awarded applicants may be asked to share feedback with USDA to evaluate the Agency’s customer service performance. In addition, awardees may be asked to participate in a third-party evaluation conducted by FNS’ Office of Policy Support.

## 7. Federal Awarding Agency Contacts

For questions regarding this solicitation, please contact the Grant Officer at:

Anna Arrowsmith  
Grant Officer, Grants and Fiscal Policy Division  
U.S. Department of Agriculture, FNS

1320 Braddock Place, Suite 620  
Alexandria, VA 22314  
E-mail: [anna.arrowsmith@usda.gov](mailto:anna.arrowsmith@usda.gov)

Please visit the [Farm to School Resources](#) page for RFA supporting materials. For more general information about the Community Food Systems Division, please [visit our website](#).

All questions regarding Grants.gov must be directed to [Grants.gov Applicant Support](#).

## **8. Other Information**

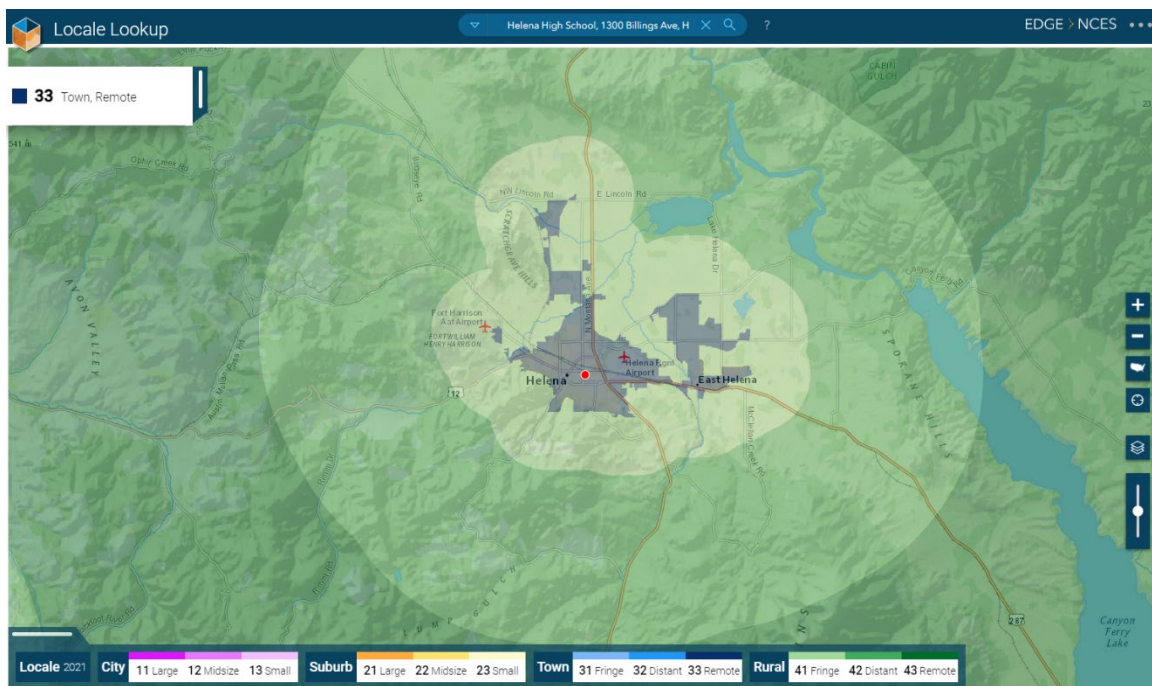
### *8.1 Debriefing Requests*

Non-selected applicants may request a debriefing to discuss the strengths and weakness of submitted proposals. This information may be useful when preparing future grant proposals. Additional information on debriefing requests will be forwarded to non-selected applicants. FNS reserves the right to provide this debriefing orally or in written format.

## Appendix A: Urban/Rural Classification Instructions

To determine urban/rural classification, please use the National Center for Education Statistics [Locale Lookup online tool](#).

1. Go to the [search site](#).
2. Click in the field marked “Search by Location.” Type in a school name, district name, physical address, or town. As you type, the tool will begin populating suggestions as a dropdown menu. Once your desired site or location appears in the list, click on it. (Tip: You may also narrow your search criteria by clicking the down arrow next to the search field and selecting one of the displayed options that is relevant to your search).
3. After you have selected the desired location, the location will be displayed on the map as a gray dot. Click directly on the dot to display the locale code. Clicking anywhere else on the map will display the code for the area that you clicked, not the location you searched. The dot will turn red for the location that has been selected on the map.
4. Once the location is selected, the locale code will display on the upper left of the map. See screenshot below. Enter the two-digit classification code (e.g., 11, 12, 31) on the Coversheet.



For complete definitions, visit the [National Center for Education Statistics website](#).

## Appendix B: Optional Priority Group Declaration Checklist (Bonus Points)

If your project reaches one or more priority groups and you would like to be considered for bonus priority points, please fill out this checklist and include it with your application submission.

**Applicants that do not submit the completed checklist with their application will not receive bonus points.** Applicants should include the Priority Declaration Checklist as its own page or as a separate attachment to ensure full credit.

An applicant reaching any of the racial equity priorities is eligible for seven bonus points. More than one racial equity priority may apply to the applicant's project, and applicants are encouraged to check multiple, but only seven bonus points will be awarded regardless of how many racial equity priorities are selected. Applicants will receive one priority point for each organization type priority their project satisfies. The maximum number of bonus priority points awarded shall not exceed ten (10) points.

If USDA is unable to verify that an applicant is eligible for any priority groups claimed below, the applicant may not be permitted to qualify for priority consideration. Please see [Section 5.2](#) of the FY 2025 RFA for more details.

Please check all the priority group(s) that your project will serve and for which you would like to identify for priority consideration:

Racial Equity priorities (seven points):

- Applicant is an Indian Tribal Organization, Alaska Native Corporation, or an entity led and/or staffed by American Indians and Alaska Natives and serving American Indian and Alaska Native communities.
- Applicant is an organization led and/or staffed by Black/African Americans and serving Black/African American communities.
- Applicant is an organization led and/or staffed by people of color and serving communities of color (defined as Black/African American, American Indian, Alaskan Native, Hispanic/Latino, Asian, and/or Pacific Islander).

Organization Type priorities (one point each, three points maximum):

- At least 40 percent of children served are eligible for free or reduced-price meals.
- Applicant is a small- to medium-sized agricultural producer or group of small- to medium-sized agricultural producers.
- Project is located in and serving eligible CNP sites in a rural area.



## Appendix C: Suggested Budget Narrative Template and Checklist

### Suggested Budget Narrative Template

Please delete any unused sample text prior to submission

1. PERSONNEL	FEDERAL REQUEST	MATCH/IN-KIND	TOTAL	NARRATIVE EXPLANATION
1a. Title				Hourly wage x # hours per year x # years
1b. Title				Annual salary x FTE x # years
1c. Title				
<b>Personnel Total</b>				

2. FRINGE BENEFITS	FEDERAL REQUEST	MATCH/IN-KIND	TOTAL	NARRATIVE EXPLANATION
2a. PERSONNEL 1a.				Total salary x fringe % rate
2b. PERSONNEL 1b.				
2c. PERSONNEL 1c.				
<b>Fringe Benefits Total</b>				

3. TRAVEL	FEDERAL REQUEST	MATCH/IN-KIND	TOTAL	NARRATIVE EXPLANATION
One national or regional-level networking and training event registration fee				# of people @ XXX
Airfare				RT name of Airport to/from name of Airport, XXX Airline, XXX Fare as of date, # people @ \$XXX / person (\$XXX base fare + \$XX tax and fees)
Airline checked baggage fee				# bags @ \$XX / bag
Mileage				RT place of business to/from Airport, type of transportation, # mi. x # people @ \$0.XXX / mi.
Airport parking				# days x # people @ \$XX/day

Ground transportation				# days x # people @ est. \$XX/day
Lodging				In-State/out-of-State rate, date, # days # people @ \$XXX / day
Lodging tax				in-State/out-of-State rate, XX% / day, # days x # people @ \$XX.XX / day
Per diem (M&IE):				in-State/out-of-State rate, full day, # days x # people @ \$XX.XX / day
Per diem (M&IE)				in-State/out-of-State rate, first & last days of travel, # days x # people @ \$XX.XX / day
<b>Travel Total</b>				

<b>4. SUPPLIES (Note: Allowable costs are located at 2 CFR Part 200, Subpart E)</b>	<b>FEDERAL REQUEST</b>	<b>MATCH/IN-KIND</b>	<b>TOTAL</b>	<b>NARRATIVE EXPLANATION</b>
4a. XXX				
4b. XXX				
4c. Office supplies				
4d. Professional development materials				
4e. Computer(s)				
4f. Computer workstation(s)				
4g. Software				
<b>Supplies Total</b>				

<b>5. EQUIPMENT</b>	<b>FEDERAL REQUEST</b>	<b>MATCH/IN-KIND</b>	<b>TOTAL</b>	<b>NARRATIVE EXPLANATION</b>
5a. XXX				
5b. XXX				
<b>Equipment Total</b>				

<b>6. CONTRACTUAL</b>	<b>FEDERAL REQUEST</b>	<b>MATCH/IN-KIND</b>	<b>TOTAL</b>	<b>NARRATIVE EXPLANATION</b>
6a. Type/Name of contractor, service to provide				# hrs. / yr. @ \$XXX / hr.
6b. Type/Name of contractor, service to provide,				# hrs. / yr. @ \$XXX / hr.
<b>Contractual Total</b>				

7. OTHER	FEDERAL REQUEST	MATCH/IN-KIND	TOTAL	NARRATIVE EXPLANATION
7c. Operating Costs per person				
7d. Professional Development				
7e. Software Licenses				
7f. Postage, Shipping/Handling				
7g. Fees				
<b>Other Total</b>				

8. TOTAL COSTS	FEDERAL REQUEST	MATCH/IN-KIND	TOTAL	NARRATIVE EXPLANATION
8a. Total Direct Costs	\$XXXX			[You will not need to write anything in this column] Ensure the total of the SF-424A and SF-424B are the same
8b. Total Indirect Costs [or maximum Administrative Costs % allowed]				calculation = total Direct costs x IDC rate
Total costs (Budget categories 8a + 8b)				[You will not need to write anything in this column]

## RFA Budget Narrative Checklist

FOR GRANT APPLICANT USE ONLY. DO NOT RETURN THIS FORM WITH THE APPLICATION.

This checklist will assist you in completing the budget narrative portion of the application. Please review the checklist to ensure the items below are addressed in the budget narrative.

**Note:** The budget and budget narrative, as well as forms SF-424 and SF-424A must be in line with the proposal project description (statement of work) bona fide need. FNS reserves the right to request information not clearly addressed. All funding requests must be in whole dollars.

ITEM	YES	NO
<b>Personnel</b>		
Did you include all key employees paid for by this grant under this heading?		
Are employees of the applicant's organization identified by name and position title?		
Did you reflect percentage of time the Project Director will devote to the project in full-time equivalents (FTE)?		
<b>Fringe Benefits</b>		
Did you include your organization's fringe benefit amount along with the basis for the computation?		
Did you list the type of fringe benefits to be covered with Federal funds?		
<b>Travel</b>		
Are travel expenses itemized? For example, origination/destination points, number and purpose of trips, number of staff traveling, mode of transportation and cost of each trip.		
Are the attendee objectives and travel justifications included in the narrative?		
Is the basis for the lodging estimates identified in the budget? For example, include excerpt from travel regulations.		
<b>Equipment</b>		
Is the need for the equipment justified in the narrative?		
Are the types of equipment, unit costs, and the number of items to be purchased listed in the budget?		
Is the basis for the cost per item or other basis of computation stated in the budget?		
<b>Supplies</b>		
Are the types of supplies, unit costs, and the number of items to be purchased reflected in the budget?		
Is the basis for the costs per item or other basis of computation stated?		
<b>Contractual:</b> (FNS reserves the right to request information on all contractual awards and associated costs after the contract is awarded.)		
Has the bona fide need been clearly identified in the project description to justify the cost for a contract or subgrant expense(s) shown on the budget?		
A justification for all sole-source contracts must be provided in the budget narrative prior to approving this identified cost.		
<b>Other</b>		

<p>Consultant Services: Has the bona fide need been clearly identified in the project description to justify the cost shown on the budget? The following information must be provided in the justification: description of service, the consultant’s name and an itemized list of all direct cost and fees, number of personnel including the position title (specialty and specialized qualifications as appropriate to the costs), number of estimated hours and hourly wages per hour, and all expenses and fees directly related to the proposed services to be rendered to the project.</p>		
<p>For all other line items listed under the “Other” heading: List all items to be covered within “Other” along with the methodology on how the applicant derived the costs to be charged to the program.</p>		
<p><b>Indirect Costs</b></p>		
<p>Has the applicant obtained a Negotiated Indirect Cost Rate Agreement (NICRA) from a Federal Agency? If yes, a copy of the most recent and signed NICRA must be provided along with the application.</p>		
<p>2 CFR 200 allows any non-Federal entity that has never received a negotiated indirect cost rate to charge a de Minimis rate of <b>15 percent</b> of modified total direct costs, which the non-Federal entity may use indefinitely as a Federally-negotiated rate.</p>		

## Appendix D: Template CNP Operator Letter of Commitment

The Richard B. Russell National School Lunch Act mandates that Farm to School Grant Program awards improve access to local foods in eligible CNP sites. Consequently, **if an applicant does not operate the NSLP, CACFP, SFSP, and/or the SBP, the applicant must include at least one letter of commitment from a school, child care institution, or summer sponsor operating the NSLP, CACFP, SFSP, and/or SBP, or from a State Agency administering NSLP, CACFP, SFSP, and/or the SBP.** This letter of commitment does count toward the three-letter limit. Be sure that the letter clearly indicates which CNP(s) the partner operates or administers as demonstrated in this template and how they will be involved in the project.

*CNP Operator's Letterhead*

{Date}

{CNP operator's organization name}

{CNP operator's street address}

{CNP operator's city, State, ZIP}

To Erica Antonson, Acting Branch Chief, Grants Management Operations Branch:

The {CNP operator's organization name} provides this letter to indicate our commitment to serve as the program site and implementation partner for {applicant's name} in their project, {"Project Title"}.

{Provide information about the CNP operator, including the nature of the commitment.}

{Identify the specific CNP(s) that the partnering organization operates. Any combination of one or more of the programs NSLP, CACFP, SFSP, and/or the SBP is acceptable.}

Sincerely,

{Signature}

{Name of Director, CEO, etc.}

{Contact information}

## Appendix E: Match Letter Template

The grant recipient must show evidence of matching support of at least 25 percent of the total budget in the form of cash or in-kind contributions. See [Section 3.3](#) for more information regarding match requirements.

*School District/Agency/Organization Letterhead*

{Date}

{Name of Entity Providing Match}

{Address}

{City, State, ZIP}

To Erica Antonson, Acting Branch Chief, Grants Management Operations Branch:

The {Organization Name} commits to providing {total \$ amount which must match what is in budget} in matching funds for {applicant's name} in their project, {"Project Title"}.

The {total \$ amount} matching funds will be provided during the project's period of performance.

This amount will be distributed as {Describe the source of match, what expenses are being provided, e.g., in-kind personnel expenses, garden supplies, meeting space, etc., and how the calculation was derived} towards the completion of the project.

Should there be any questions regarding this letter, please contact us at {contact information}.

Sincerely,

{Signature}

{Name of Director, CEO, etc.}

{Contact information}