



United States
Department of
Agriculture

Food and
Nutrition
Service

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Alexandria, VA
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DATE: April 17, 2012

MEMO CODE: SP 27-2012

SUBJECT: USDA Farm to School Grants – Please spread the word

TO: Regional Directors
Special Nutrition Programs
All Regions

State Directors
Special Nutrition Programs
All States

This memorandum announces the availability of Department of Agriculture (USDA) farm to school grants as part of the farm to school program established by the Healthy Hunger-Free Kids Act (HHFKA). I am writing to encourage you to pass this information on to school districts in your State and region. I've attached an information sheet that provides a quick reference about the farm to school grants. For more detailed information, please visit the USDA Farm to School website (<http://www.fns.usda.gov/cnd/f2s/>).

These grants support Secretary Vilsack's and Deputy Secretary Merrigan's focus on local and regional food systems and will add to the host of programs that USDA offers that support small farmers and local procurement. Beginning in fiscal year 2013, the farm to school program will provide grants to assist in the development of farm to school efforts across the country.

The term 'farm to school' is generally understood to include efforts that connect schools with local or regional producers in order to serve local or regionally produced foods in school cafeterias. USDA considers farm to school to be inclusive of many types of producers, such as farmers, ranchers, and fishermen, as well as many types of food businesses, including food processors, manufacturers, distributors and other value-added operations. In addition to procurement activities, food, agriculture and nutrition-based educational efforts that span a host of hands-on experiential activities, such as school gardens, field trips to local farms, and cooking classes, are also included in the concept of farm to school. Standards-based curriculum centered on food, agriculture, and/or nutrition is often integrated as well.

There will be two types of grants available; planning and implementation grants.

Planning grants are intended primarily for K-12 school food authorities who participate in the National School Lunch or Breakfast Program that are in the beginning phases of their farm to school efforts.

Implementation grants are geared towards advancing existing farm to school initiatives. K-12 school food authorities who participate in the National School Lunch or Breakfast Program, along with State and local agencies, Indian tribal organizations, agricultural producers or groups of agricultural producers, and non-profit entities working in partnership with school districts, may apply for implementation grants.

Regional Directors
State Directors
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These grants offer support for school districts to scale existing programs or design new endeavors. The grants will be offered annually and require at least a 25% funding match. Applications are due June 15, 2012, and awards are expected to be made in October 2012.

I urge you to consider these grants as farm to school initiatives provide opportunities to serve more fresh produce, while also connecting children to agriculture and nutrition.

A handwritten signature in blue ink that reads "Cindy Long". The signature is written in a cursive, flowing style.

Cindy Long
Director
Child Nutrition Division

Attachment

USDA Farm to School Grants

April 2012

Brief Summary for Use in Promoting the Availability of Grant Funding

For Specific Farm to School Grant Program Details, Please Refer to the Request for Applications

Prepared by Deborah Kane, National Director, USDA Farm to School Program

(Deborah.Kane@fns.usda.gov or 503.326.2010 with questions)

Background

The Healthy, Hunger-Free Kids Act of 2010 (HHFKA) established 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 eligible schools. To fulfill the farm to school mandate in the HHFKA, effective October 1, 2012, \$5 million will be provided to the United States Department of Agriculture (USDA) on an annual basis to support grants, technical assistance, and the Federal administrative costs related to USDA's farm to school program.

Amount Available in the First Funding Round

The USDA Food & Nutrition Service (FNS) is charged with implementing the farm to school program. In this first funding cycle, FNS anticipates awarding up to \$3.5 million in grant funding to support efforts that improve access to local foods in eligible schools. It is anticipated that the remaining \$1.5 million will support a combination of training and technical assistance, administrative costs, and/or additional farm to school grants.

Two Types of Grants

Grant funds will be made available on a competitive basis, subject to availability of Federal funds. In this first funding round, USDA will solicit applications for two types of grants:

1. **Planning grants** are intended for school districts just getting started on farm to school activities and are intended to help school districts or schools organize and structure their farm to school efforts for maximum impact by embedding known best practices into early design considerations.

Who can apply:

- K-12 School Food Authorities, nonprofit private schools, charter schools, Indian tribal schools, and others that participate in the National School Lunch or Breakfast Programs.

2. **Implementation grants** are intended to scale or further develop existing farm to school initiatives. *Who can apply:*

- K-12 School Food Authorities, nonprofit private schools, charter schools, Indian tribal schools, and others that participate in the National School Lunch or Breakfast Programs,
- State and local agencies,
- Indian tribal organizations,
- Agricultural producers or groups of agricultural producers, and
- Non-profit entities.

Priority Consideration Given to High Free/Reduced Price Meal Enrollment

Given the HHFKA mandate that priority consideration be given to schools serving a high proportion of children who are eligible for free or reduced price meals, projects that serve school districts and schools that have high free and reduced price meal enrollment will receive extra points in evaluation scoring.

Funding Amounts and Expected Distribution of Awards

Planning grants are expected to range from \$20,000 - \$45,000 and represent approximately 25 percent of the total awards. Implementation grants are expected to range from \$65,000 - \$100,000 and represent approximately 75 percent of the total awards.

A Match is Required, Evaluation Too

For both types of grants, the applicant must provide at least 25 percent of the costs of the grant project as the Federal share of costs for this grant cannot exceed 75 percent of the total cost of the project, as required by the

HHFKA. Authorizing language also states that as a condition of receiving a farm to school grant, each grant recipient shall cooperate in an evaluation of the program carried out using grant funds.

Pick One, Then Think about Partnering

Applicants must choose between submitting a Planning grant or an Implementation grant. Only one application per eligible entity is permitted. As appropriate, USDA encourages school districts, and other eligible entities, to work together and submit “cluster” applications where a USDA investment in, for example, one school district working with several districts, might benefit a wider geographic area than funding to any one district, or eligible entity, alone.

How To Access the Request for Applications (RFA)

The RFA will be posted on USDA’s [Farm to School website](#) and available at www.grants.gov. Note that grants.gov will be unavailable for scheduled maintenance April 28-29, 2012. Read the [Grants.gov Blog](#) for more information.

Important Dates

- April 17, 2012: Request for Applications Released
- May 18, 2012: (Suggested) Letter of Intent Deadline
- June 15, 2012: Proposals Due
- Shortly after October 1, 2012: Awards Announced and Funds (Expected to Be) Available

Webinars to Learn More:

Two webinars will be offered so that grant applicants can learn more about this grant opportunity. To receive additional information about webinars, please be sure to register for the [Farm to School Listserve](#) by selecting “Farm to School” as a topic of interest from the options once an email address has been entered.

- Tuesday, May 15th, 1:00 EST Implementation grants
- Thursday, May 17th, 1:00 EST Planning grants

Don’t Wait for a Webinar to Get Your Question Answered

You can get your question answered at any point in the process by contacting:

Deborah Kane, National Director, Farm to School Program, Food & Nutrition Services (FNS)
Deborah.Kane@fns.usda.gov or 503.326.2010

Gregory Walton, Grants Management Specialist, FNS
Greg.Walton@fns.usda.gov or 703.305.1575

More Info Coming, Send Us Feedback

To receive updates on USDA’s plans for farm to school training and technical assistance, or any aspect of the USDA farm to school program, please see the USDA [Farm to School website](#) or subscribe to the [Farm to School Listserve](#) by selecting “Farm to School” as a topic of interest from the options once an email address has been entered.

Given the newness of this program, and the great benefits associated with stakeholder engagement, feedback regarding the preliminary grant program design, as well as ideas and comments regarding the allocation of the remaining \$1.5 million in available resources, are encouraged and expected. Please submit feedback by July 15, 2012 to f2sfeedback@fns.usda.gov with the subject header: F2S Feedback.