



# THE USDA FARM TO SCHOOL GRANT PROGRAM



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EVERY YEAR, the United States Department of Agriculture (USDA) awards up to \$5 million in grants to help schools connect with local producers and teach children where their food comes from.

## Eligible Entities

Grantees include schools and districts (large and small, rural and urban), Indian tribal organizations, agricultural producers or groups of agricultural producers, non-profit entities, and state and local agencies.

## Types of Grants

Designed to increase the availability of local foods in schools, grants can help new farm to school programs get started or expand existing efforts. Funds support a wide range of activities from training, planning, and developing partnerships to creating new menu items, establishing supply chains, offering taste tests to children, purchasing equipment, planting school gardens, and organizing field trips to agricultural operations.

## Award Amounts

Grants range on the low end from \$20,000 to \$45,000 and on the high end from \$65,000 to \$100,000. In all cases, grant awards are capped at \$100,000. 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.

## Timeline

The timeline varies from year to year, but USDA generally releases a request for applications (RFA) near the beginning of the calendar year. Applications are due approximately three months after the RFA is released, and proposals are reviewed throughout the spring and summer. Final awards are announced near the start of the federal fiscal year, which begins in October.

## Examples of Projects

Here are just a few examples of the types of projects USDA has funded through its Farm to School Grant Program:

- \* The Lawrence County School District in Walnut Ridge, Arkansas worked with other districts to pool their food dollars and aggregate buying power to attract new local producers to the school food service market.
- \* Lake County Community Development Corporation, in Ronan, Montana collaborated with regional lentil farmers to procure protein and fiber rich lentil patties.



- \* The Oneida Tribe of Indians of Wisconsin developed an aquaponics system capable of producing fish and fresh produce year-round. The system will serve as an educational tool and provide nutritious food for students.
- \* The Washington State Department of Agriculture conducted regional "mobile tours" in which agricultural producers and school food service directors toured the state together, learning about agricultural specialties, identifying opportunities for partnership, and solidifying regional networks.
- \* Chicago Public Schools in Chicago, Illinois implemented a school garden food safety program.
- \* Working Landscapes, a nonprofit organization in Warrenton, North Carolina increased student access to locally grown vegetables in a predominantly rural, low-income part of the state. Their initiative helped local, small-scale, and minority farmers process their food and deliver it to schools.
- \* Portland Public Schools in Portland, Oregon got a "Fresh Start" by bringing local ingredients into its breakfast program.

- \* The Vermont Agency of Agriculture, Food and Markets worked with regional food hubs (servicing more than 50 schools) to strengthen innovative distribution models for getting local food to schools.
- \* The New York Botanical Garden in New York, New York tested a holistic school gardening model that integrated gardening activities with hands-on workshops. The project, benefitting 12 charter schools, also piloted and evaluated efforts to bring more local foods into school cafeterias.



Complete information on the USDA Farm to School Grant Program, including information about past awardees, webinars, submission deadlines and details on how to apply can be found at [usda.gov/farmtoschool](http://usda.gov/farmtoschool).



For more information, and to sign up to receive USDA's bi-weekly Farm to School E-letter, please visit [www.fns.usda.gov/farmtoschool](http://www.fns.usda.gov/farmtoschool). Questions? Email us at [farmtoschool@fns.usda.gov](mailto:farmtoschool@fns.usda.gov).

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