

2021 California Farm to School Incubator Grant Program

Request for Applications

Released:
December 21, 2020

Applications Due:
by 5pm PT on February 16, 2021
No late submissions accepted



**California Department of Food and Agriculture
Inspection Services Division
Office of Farm to Fork**

Website: <https://cafarmtofork.cdfa.ca.gov/>

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About the Program

Purpose

The California Department of Food and Agriculture's (CDFA) California Farm to School Incubator Grant Program will award competitive grants to support innovative local and regional farm to school projects. CDFA is looking to support programs that promote innovation in nutrition education, sustainable production and procurement, and high-quality student experience.

The Farm to School Incubator Grant Program is in alignment with CDFA's [California Agricultural Vision](#) (Ag Vision), which serves as a roadmap for California agriculture. The goals of Ag Vision include: better health and wellbeing, a healthier planet, ensuring thriving communities in the state, ensuring connections between farmers and the consuming public, and ensuring that a diverse set of agriculture entities are thriving.

CDFA encourages partnerships with producers that identify as small or medium sized farms, BIPOC (Black, Indigenous, and People of Color), women-owned, LGBTQ+, Veteran-owned, and/or socially disadvantaged farmers or ranchers.¹

CDFA also encourages partnerships with producers that have demonstrated and documented the use of Climate Smart Agricultural management practices,² such as cover cropping, no or reduced till, hedgerow plantings, composting, prescribed grazing, and other regenerative strategies that increase resilience to climate change, improve the health of communities and soil, protect water and air quality, increase biodiversity, and help store carbon in the soil. Other regenerative strategies may include, but are not limited to: organic or transitioning to organic, certified 100% grass-fed, or reduced or no use of synthetic (fossil-fuel derived) pesticides and fertilizers.

There are two funding tracks.

Track 1: The California Farm to School Innovation Grant will fund Local Education Agencies (LEA) to establish new or expand existing integrated farm to school programs that: (1) procure California grown or produced whole or minimally processed foods and integrate these foods into school meals; and (2) coordinate educational opportunities between cafeterias, classrooms, and communities.

¹Per the USDA, "socially disadvantaged farmers or ranchers" means a farmer or rancher who is a member of a socially disadvantaged group. A socially disadvantaged group is a group whose members have been subject to racial or ethnic prejudice because of their identity as members of a group without regard to their individual qualities. Those groups include American Indians or Alaskan Natives, Asians, Blacks or African Americans, Native Hawaiians or other Pacific Islanders, and Hispanics.

²Climate Smart Agricultural management practices include those recognized by the [CDFA Office of Environmental Farming and Innovation](#), including the [Healthy Soils Program](#), and those recognized by the [USDA-NRCS Conservation Practice Standards](#).

Track 2: The California Farm to School Regional Partnerships Grant will fund farm to school partnerships to expand existing farm to school initiatives and increase collaboration and coordination between producers and the schools they serve, providing funding for infrastructure, transportation, coordination, planning, or other necessary program components. Programs will increase procurement of California produced foods, sustainability, student engagement, and collaboration between regional farm to school partners.

Funding and Duration

The Budget Act of 2020 appropriated \$8.496 million from the General Fund to CDFA for this California Farm to School Incubator Grant Program.

CDFA will make approximately \$6.496 million available for Track 1: The California Farm to School Innovation Grant:

- Project award totals will be determined by the following funding formula, which is dependent on LEA enrollment. For small LEAs (less than 5,000 students enrolled), the total award available for each LEA is equal to the number of National School Lunch Program meals served (lunch meals only) during the 2018-19 school year multiplied by twelve (.12) cents per meal. For all other LEAs (5,001 students or more enrolled), the total award available for each LEA is equal to the number of National School Lunch Program meals served (lunch meals only) during the 2018-19 school year multiplied by eight (.08) cents per meal.
- CDFA will fund up to 100% of the total project cost, with a maximum grant award of \$500,000 per project, and a minimum award of \$20,000 per project. Matching funds are not required. See **Cost Share** for more details.
- Please note that if, based on the funding formula, a small LEA does not meet the minimum award amount, the LEA will automatically be eligible for \$20,000.
- At least 30% of grant award total must be used to integrate farm to school education and procurement programs.
 - Please note that funds can be used to develop new farm to school education opportunities if they do not yet exist, but the ultimate goal is to integrate these new or existing educational opportunities with procurement programs.
 - Farm to school education can include, but is not limited to: school gardens, school or district farms, hands-on culinary education, agricultural education/experiences, nutrition education, Harvest of the Month taste tests, farm field trips, and school visits from farmers. CDFA welcomes innovative ideas to integrate education and student engagement activities with procurement of California grown or produced foods.
- Up to 70% of grant award total can be used to reimburse procurement of new and whole or minimally processed California grown or produced foods.
 - Minimally Processed Definition per USDA: Minimal processing may include: (a) Those traditional processes used to make food edible or to preserve it or to make it safe for human consumption, e.g., smoking, roasting, freezing, drying, and

fermenting, or (b) those physical processes that do not fundamentally alter the raw product or that only separate a whole, intact food into component parts, e.g., grinding meat, separating eggs into albumen and yolk, and pressing fruits to produce juices.

- The maximum grant project term is 1 year, 10 months.
- Grant funds cannot be expended before June 1, 2021 or after March 31, 2023.
- CDFA reserves the right to offer an award amount less than the award requested.
- This is a reimbursement grant program. If awarded a grant, recipients will fund the project and submit monthly invoices to CDFA to be reimbursed within 45 days after invoices are approved in most circumstances. The grant contract must be completed and signed by CDFA before project activities begin.

CDFA will make approximately \$2 million available for Track 2: The California Farm to School Regional Partnerships Grant:

- CDFA will fund up to 100% of the total project cost with a maximum grant award of \$250,000 per project and a minimum award of \$10,000 per project. Matching funds are not required. See **Cost Share** for more details.
- The maximum grant project term is 1 year, 10 months.
- Grant funds cannot be expended before June 1, 2021 or after March 31, 2023.
- CDFA reserves the right to offer an award amount less than the award requested.
- Recipients may be eligible to receive an advance payment for project expenditures. Advance payment shall not exceed the amount necessary for project expenses for a three-month period, and funds received as an advance payment shall be deposited into a federally insured, interest-bearing account that provides the ability to track interest earned and withdrawals.

The period between receipt of the advance payment funds and disbursement of the advance payment funds shall be minimized to the extent possible. Failure to liquidate payments within the three-month period may result in denial of future advance payment requests.

- Advance payment is not allowable under the following circumstances:
 - An existing advance is not completely liquidated
 - The advance will reduce the project balance below ten percent of award amount
 - An unresolved dispute exists
 - Resolution of an audit or agreed-upon-procedure finding of overpayment, unallowable costs, inadequately supported costs, or unsupported costs is pending
 - The project is not current in invoicing or reporting
 - The project is in the final three months of the project duration
 - Additional conditions imposed prohibit advance payment
 - Advance payment is otherwise prohibited by law or grant program requirements

Eligibility and Exclusions

- **The CA Farm to School Innovation Grant** will be available for Local Education Agencies within California that operate National School Lunch Programs.
 - A Local Education Agency (LEA): As defined in Elementary and Secondary Education Act, a public board of education or other public authority legally constituted within a State for either administrative control or direction of, or to perform a service function for, public elementary schools or secondary schools in a city, county, township, school district, or other political subdivision of a state, or for a combination of school districts or counties that is recognized in a state as an administrative agency for its public elementary schools or secondary schools.
 - CDFA encourages LEAs with preschool programs to include those programs in their project.
 - Please note that applicants are limited to one application in each funding track.
- **The CA Farm to School Regional Partnerships Grant** will be available for LEAs and farm to school partners (food producers, producer networks or associations, farmer or rancher cooperatives, majority controlled producer-based business ventures, food councils, local or tribal governments, nonprofit corporations, economic development corporations, public benefit corporations, community supported agriculture networks or associations, regional farmers' market associations, county agencies or regional authorities, philanthropic organizations, institutions of higher education, commercial, federal, or farm credit system lending institutions).
 - Food producers can include those who produce food in a variety of ways (e.g., farmers, ranchers, fishers, those using indigenous agriculture practices, etc.).
 - Partnerships must include at least two LEAs and at least one regional partner.
 - Any one of the entities in the partnership can serve as the lead applicant. The other entities must provide letters of commitment.
 - Please note that applicants are limited to one application in each funding track.

Reporting

CA Farm to School Innovation Grant recipients will be required to:

- Submit monthly invoices to CDFA detailing California food procurement to be reimbursed for actual allowable costs incurred, as well as all other allowable costs to be reimbursed (e.g., labor, kitchen infrastructure, educational integration, etc.)
 - Please note that CDFA will provide grant recipients with a template invoice to complete and submit each month. The invoice will include line items for allowable costs and a range of procurement metrics such as product name, product amount and cost, purchasing source, etc. Regarding the purchasing source, identifying the farm or producer name in the invoice is recommended whenever possible.
- Submit quarterly reports summarizing farm to school program integration progress, challenges, and successes

- Participate in a final interview after the grant term concludes to discuss successes, challenges, and other related information
- Recipients must also report data to CDFA annually regarding their California food procurement practices for the duration of the grant and the following year after the end of the project term

CA Farm to School Regional Partnerships Grant recipients will be required to:

- Submit monthly or quarterly invoices to CDFA detailing spending and providing documentation to substantiate costs
- Submit quarterly reports summarizing project progress
- Participate in a final interview to discuss partnership expansion accomplishments and challenges, evidence/description of increased collaboration between producers and schools, budget actuals, any program changes, and other relevant information
- Submit regular invoicing in accordance with Advance Payment regulations or submit quarterly invoices as part of project reimbursement

All grant recipients will be required to participate in evaluation activities for the California Farm to School Incubator Grant Program as needed. A CDFA representative or external designee will work with grant recipients to address questions and gather necessary evaluation data. Program evaluation will demonstrate the impact of the grant program and will support efforts to develop future Farm to School Grant Programs.

Cost Share

The Farm to School Incubator Grant Program requires no matching dollars. However, applicants must be able to show a commitment to farm to school programming in the application process through letters of commitment/support and in the application under sections “Description of Farm to School History and Programming” and/or “Farm to School Partners and Commitments.”

Allowable and Unallowable Costs

Track 1: The CA Farm to School Innovation Grant:

- Allowable costs:
 - Up to 10% of the total award can be used for indirect costs
 - Up to 10% of the total award can be used for labor costs associated with processing and procuring new California grown or produced food products
 - If applicants would like to request to use more than 10% of the total award for these labor costs (up to 20%), they can include a detailed and justified reasoning in the budget section of the application, explaining what percentage of the award they hope to use for these costs and why.
 - Up to 10% of the total award can be used for kitchen infrastructure to support utilization of California grown or produced food products in school nutrition programs

Application, Review, and Notification

Grant Application

Applicants are required to complete an application containing the following:

Track One: California Farm to School Innovation Grant:

- Project Summary
- Need for Project
- Total Dollar Amount Requested (based on funding formula)
- LEA Data (2018-19 school year): number of school sites, total student enrollment, Free/Reduced Meal Rate, demographic information, etc.
- School Nutrition Data (2018-19 school year): number of school food service sites, number of school sites under Community Eligibility Provision, school meal participation rate, programs offered, etc.
- Description of Farm to School History and Programming
- California Procurement Baseline: Includes types of California grown or produced food items purchased in 2018-19 school year, dollar amount spent on each type of item, purchasing methods, and types of purchasing sources. Additional information such as the specific products purchased and the specific purchasing sources (e.g., farm name, or distributor name and farm name) is encouraged but not required for the baseline report.
- Project Narrative: Includes project description, timeline, evaluation plan, project sustainability
 - In the project description, applicants are encouraged to include a strategy for incorporating culturally relevant foods in their project.
- Budget Timeline
- Farm to School Partners and Commitments
- A Letter of Commitment from LEA superintendent (or equivalent) and Letters of Support from at least two Farm to School Partners
 - Letters of commitment from LEAs must include an endorsement of the project and use of resources. Letters of support from farm to school partners must include an endorsement of the project and a description of how they will support the project.
- COVID-19 Adaptations

Track Two: California Farm to School Regional Partnerships Grant:

- Project Summary
- Total Dollar Amount Requested
- Project Partners
- LEA Data (2018-19 school year): number of school sites, total student enrollment, Free/Reduced Meal Rate, demographic information, nutrition programs offered, etc.
- Description of Farm to School History and Programming

- Project Narrative: Includes project description, timeline, evaluation plan, project sustainability
 - In the project description, applicants are encouraged to include a strategy for incorporating culturally relevant foods in their project.
- Budget Timeline
- A Letter of Commitment from all parties listed in the application other than the lead applicant
 - Letters of commitment from LEAs must be signed by the superintendent (or equivalent) and include an endorsement of the project and use of resources. Letters of commitment from regional partners must include the organization's mission, history, and qualifications, as well as a description of how they will support the project.

Late applications will not be accepted. Grant applications must be completed and submitted electronically via the online WizeHive submission portal. Applicants must create a user account in WizeHive in order to apply. The WizeHive submission portal for Track 1: CA Farm to School Innovation Grant can be accessed here: https://webportalapp.com/sp/login/cdfa_innovation. The WizeHive submission portal for Track 2: CA Farm to School Regional Partnerships Grant can be accessed here: https://webportalapp.com/sp/login/cdfa_regional_partnership. Once a user account is created for one of the submission portals, the same user account can be used for the other submission portal. LEAs are welcome to apply to both grant tracks. Applicants are limited to one application in each track.

- The WizeHive submission portals utilize a question and answer format. Applicants must answer all required application questions. Applicants are also required to send requests for letters of commitment/support via the WizeHive submission portals. Submitted applications will only be considered if applicants have responded to all required application questions and submitted all required letters of commitment/support. Applicants will receive a confirmation email upon submission. Please contact the Office of Farm to Fork via email at cafarmtofork@cdfa.ca.gov if a confirmation email is not received.
- For questions about the WizeHive system, please contact the Office of Farm to Fork via email at cafarmtofork@cdfa.ca.gov.

Review Criteria

CDFA will score each application using the following scorecard:

2021 Farm to School Incubator Grant Program: Scorecard				
Scoring Category	Track 1- Farm to School Innovation Grant: Scoring Description	Points (100 total)	Track 2 - Farm to School Regional Partnerships Grant: Scoring Description	Points (100 total)
Identified Community Need	<p>Economic Factors</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Free/Reduced Meal Rate Opportunity Zone or Other Federal/Local designation of need <p>Community Diversity</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Serves or Partners with American Indians or Alaskan Natives, Asians, Blacks or African Americans, Native Hawaiians or other Pacific Islanders, and/or Hispanics. <p>Other Factors: <i>Applicants can choose to provide additional information to highlight community need, such as:</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Food insecurity rate Unemployment rate CalEnviroScreen 3.0 Percentile Serves a community impacted by recent natural disasters (e.g., wildfires) Other 	50	<p>Economic Factors</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Free/Reduced Meal Rate Opportunity Zone or Other Federal/Local designation of need <p>Community Diversity</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Serves or Partners with American Indians or Alaskan Natives, Asians, Blacks or African Americans, Native Hawaiians or other Pacific Islanders, and/or Hispanics. <p>Other Factors: <i>Applicants can choose to provide additional information to highlight community need, such as:</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Food insecurity rate Unemployment rate CalEnviroScreen 3.0 Percentile Serves a community impacted by recent natural disasters (e.g., wildfires) Other 	50
History of Farm to School Success and/or Evidence of Strong, Effective Partnerships with Key Stakeholders	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Established or committed partnerships within LEA between educators, school nutrition teams, counselors, administration, or other departments. These will be made evident in letters of commitment and letters of support. AND, if farm to school is <i>not</i> new to the LEA... ...Existing Farm to School program that procures California grown or produced food, connects classroom and cafeteria, and/or delivers experiential learning opportunities in gardens or other programs. Embraces role of school as “nutrition hub” for community by partnering with other food 	20	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Established or committed partnerships between LEAs and regional farm to school partners. These will be illustrated through letters of commitment. AND... ...Existing Farm to School program that procures California grown or produced food, connects classroom and cafeteria, and/or delivers experiential learning opportunities in gardens or other programs. Embraces role of school as “nutrition hub” for community 	20

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> access partners in local community, serving breakfast, or serving supper. Submits complete and accurate CA Procurement Baseline report. 			
Comprehensive Plan	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Plans to increase procurement of new and whole or minimally processed California grown or produced foods and integrate farm to school education and student engagement activities with the procurement program. Plans to leverage existing LEA resources (e.g., school or district farms, school gardens, etc.), if applicable. Utilizes or plans to utilize culturally relevant foods, including foods that are native to the area, in procurement and educational programs. 	10	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Plans to enhance collaboration and coordination between regional farm to school partners and LEAs, increase procurement of new and whole or minimally processed California grown or produced foods, and improve student engagement. Plans to leverage existing resources, if applicable. Utilizes or plans to utilize culturally relevant foods, including foods that are native to the area, in procurement and educational programs. 	10
Project Diversity (geography, scale)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Project spread throughout CA's diverse geography and serves small, medium, large, urban, rural, suburban communities. 	10	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Project spread throughout CA's diverse geography and serves small, medium, large, urban, rural, suburban communities. 	10
Project Sustainability	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> LEA has plan in place to continue programs and procurement practices beyond the duration of the grant term. 	10	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Partners have plan in place to continue programs and procurement practices beyond the duration of the grant term. 	10

Review Process

CDFA will conduct an initial administrative review of applications to determine whether all application requirements have been met. Misrepresentations in the application are grounds for rejection. Applicants that have met all application requirements will receive an external technical review.

CDFA reserves the right to ask applicants clarifying questions about their applications and to work with selected applicants to modify their applications.

Notification and Feedback

All applicants will be notified regarding the status of their grant applications.

CA Farm to School Incubator Grant Program Timeline	
Invitation to Submit Grant Applications	December 21, 2020
CDFA Grant Application Webinar	January 7, 2021
Grant Applications Due	February 16, 2021
Review Process & Award Announcement	February - March 2021

Appeal rights:

Any discretionary action taken by the Office of Farm to Fork may be appealed to CDFA's Office of Hearings and Appeals within ten (10) days of receiving notification. The appeal must be in writing and signed by the responsible party named on the grant application or his/her authorized agent. It must state the grounds for the appeal and include any supporting documents and a copy of the Office of Farm to Fork decision being challenged. The submission must be sent to the California Department of Food and Agriculture Office of Hearings and Appeals, 1220 N Street, Suite 315, Sacramento, CA 95814 or emailed to CDFA.LegalOffice@cdfa.ca.gov. Appeals not received in this timeframe will be denied.

Assistance and Questions

For assistance and questions related to the Farm to School Incubator Grant Program process, please contact the CDFA Office of Farm to Fork via email at cafarmtofork@cdfa.ca.gov.

Any questions received regarding the grant will be answered and posted online on the CDFA Office of Farm to Fork website: <https://cafarmtofork.cdfa.ca.gov/CaFarmtoSchoolProgram.htm>. Questions and answers will be posted weekly on the following dates:

- January 7, 2021
- January 14, 2021
- January 21, 2021
- January 28, 2021
- February 4, 2021
- February 11, 2021

The CDFA Office of Farm to Fork will conduct one webinar on the CA Farm to School Incubator Grant Program Request for Applications on January 7, 2021 at 1pm PT via Zoom. To register for the webinar, please follow this Zoom registration link:

<https://www.zoomgov.com/meeting/register/vJIsce-ppjMuH8iYEoUjaprQfOlouvqqURY>.