

Cohort 4 California Farm to School Incubator Grant Program: INFO SESSION

August 2026

This info session is part of the public comment period for this program



This Info Session is Being Recorded



CDFA's Culture of Support and Collaboration

Guiding Questions:

- ❖ How can we simplify?
- ❖ How can we help?
- ❖ How can we celebrate and validate?
- ❖ How can we create lasting impact?

Guiding Practices:

- ❖ Support and Technical Assistance
- ❖ Peer-to-Peer Learning
- ❖ Cross-Pollinating across Programs throughout the State



Considerations During this Presentation

Application Materials

- ❖ Are the questions and scoring fair and reasonable?
- ❖ Is the application accessible based on audience and timeline?

Requests for Application

- ❖ Will the grant structure fulfill the grant goals as is?
- ❖ Are the following fair and reasonable?
 - ❖ Eligibility
 - ❖ Award Amounts
 - ❖ Allowable costs and budget percentage minimums? (Track 1 and Track 2)



Grant Purpose

The California Department of Food and Agriculture (CDFA) Cohort 4 California Farm to School Incubator Grant Program will award competitive grants to support projects that cultivate equity, nurture students, build climate resilience, and create scalable and sustainable change.



Cohort 3 F2S Incubator Grant

- ❖ **Track 1:** Farm to School TK-12 Procurement and Education Grant
- ❖ **Track 2:** Farm to School Technical Assistance (TA) Grant
- ❖ **Track 3:** Farm to Early Care and Education (ECE) Grant
- ❖ **Track 4:** Farm to School Producer Grant

- ❖ 500 Applications
- ❖ 52.8 million awarded
- ❖ 195 awarded projects
- ❖ Very competitive!



Grant Priorities

Funding Priorities:

- ❖ Engage students from **underserved communities**
- ❖ Include **small to midsize California food producers**
- ❖ Include **veteran California food producers, socially disadvantaged California food producers, and/or limited-resource farm households in CA**
- ❖ Include **California food producers who utilize climate smart agriculture practices**, climate smart agriculture production systems like certified organic or transitioning to certified organic; 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; or sustainable pest management.

Additional Priorities:

- ❖ Aim to distribute awards geographically across California to the extent possible
- ❖ Set aside up to 10% of all available grant funding for awards for Tribal governments and Tribal-based non-profit organizations



What to expect in this info session...

For each funding track:

- ❖ Overview of the proposed track
- ❖ Proposed eligibility
- ❖ Proposed funding track details
- ❖ Past project example

Overall grant timeline



Three Funding Tracks

- ❖ **Track 1:** Farm to School TK-12 Procurement and Education Grant (\$19.5mill)
- ❖ **Track 2:** Farm to School Technical Assistance (TA) Subaward Grant (up to \$5.5mill)
- ❖ **Track 3:** Farm to School Producer and Food Hub Grant (\$13mill)



No, you may not apply to multiple tracks



Yes, you may apply if you have an existing grant



Which Track Should I Apply To?

Public School District,
County Office of Ed,
Charter School, OR
Tribal School in CA
that is a school food
authority (SFA) and
operates NSLP



Apply to Track 1

Farm to School
Technical
(TA) Organization

*See section 1.2
Definitions in the RFA*



Apply to Track 2 to build
capacity for and provide
subawards to...
CA SFAs, Educators,
School Sites, CA
Producers, ECE sites, and
Tribal producers, schools,
and/or ECE centers

Small producer who has
not sold to the school
market, an ECE site, a
SFA who is a farm to
school beginner,
an educator, or
an individual school site



**Apply to a Track 2 grant
recipient for a subaward
after the Cohort 4
applications are
awarded**

CA Food Producer OR
Food Hub

*See section 1.2
Definitions in the RFA*



Apply to Track 3



Track 1: F2S TK-12 Procurement & Education Grant (overview)

Track 1 will fund individual public school districts, county offices of education, charter schools, and Tribal schools in California that are a School Food Authority to establish new or expand existing farm to school programs that:

- ❖ **procure** California grown or produced, whole or minimally processed foods for incorporation into school meals, especially from food producers that utilize climate smart agriculture practices, small to midsize food producers, veteran food producers, socially disadvantaged food producers, and/or limited-resource farm households in California; **and**
- ❖ **engage** students in hands-on food education opportunities, especially standards-aligned and culturally relevant opportunities led by credentialed or certificated educators, that complement the school meal program's California food procurement efforts; **and**
- ❖ **OPTIONAL:** if desired, **employ** farm to school staff and/or offer farm to school professional development for staff.



Track 1: F2S TK-12 Procurement & Education Grant (eligibility)

**Public
school
districts**

OR

**County
offices
of ed.**

OR

**Charter
schools**

OR

**Tribal
schools**

*...that are a School Food Authority (SFA) in California
currently operating the National School Lunch Program (NSLP).*



Track 1: F2S TK-12 Procurement & Education Grant (details)

Grant Term: Up to 18 months; exact dates to be released in final RFA

Funding Formula = \$15 per student enrolled (SY 2024-25)
\$50k min and \$750k max

Allowable Costs: anything you need to buy more whole or minimally processed CA Grown foods + educate students about them:

- ❖ CA Grown food for school meals & hands-on food education
- ❖ Infrastructure/equipment/supplies for hands-on food education & school kitchens
- ❖ F2S staff (e.g., coordinators, educators)
- ❖ Labor for procuring/processing
- ❖ Travel
- ❖ Contractors
- ❖ Indirect

Note: minimum of 20% of award budget must be spent on Ca procurement costs for school meals and minimum of 20% of award budget must be spent on hands-on food education costs



Track 1: F2S TK-12 Procurement & Education Grant (app/scoring)

Application Overview	Points
Foundational Information	--
Project Team	--
Project Team + Organizational Commitment	10
Community Need	30
Farm to School History	5
Current Farm to School Practices	--
Project Title + Summary	--
Project Work Plan	30
Project Budget	20
Project Sustainability	5
Additional Applicant Information	--
Total	100

Full application package includes

- ❖ Completed application questions
- ❖ Project budget
- ❖ Project workplan



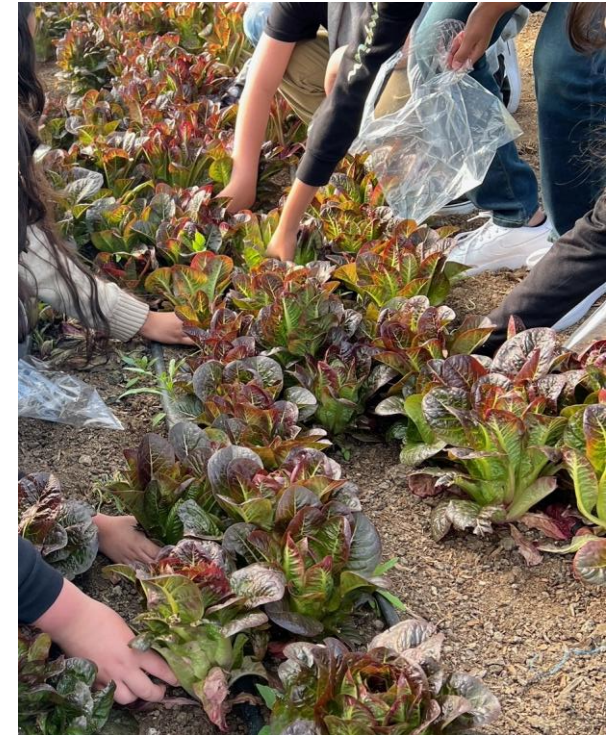
Track 1: Cohort 3 Project Example

Grantee: Eureka City Schools

Award Amount: \$200k

Project Activities:

- ❖ Providing hands-on local farm field trips and taste tests of local produce at school sites featuring the local farmers on-site
- ❖ Increasing procurement of local, seasonal fruits and vegetables from local farms for school meals



Track 2: F2S Technical Assistance (TA) Subaward Grant (overview)

Track 2 will fund increased staff capacity, access, and resources by providing pass through funding based on five subaward categories to implement resilient and sustainable farm to school programming

Track 2 projects must have statewide reach and focus their pass-through funding in one of the following categories:

- ❖ Farm to School Procurement Readiness and Planning for SFAs
- ❖ Farm to School Standards Aligned Hands-on Food Education
- ❖ Farm to School Readiness and Planning for Producers
- ❖ Tribal Farm to School
- ❖ Farm to Early Care and Education

Note: There will be only 1-2 awardees per Track 2 category



Track 2: F2S Technical Assistance (TA) Subaward Grant (overview)

Track 2 Subawardee projects must aim to accomplish the following goals:

- ❖ **Farm to School Procurement Readiness and Planning for SFAs** Increase capacity to procure CA grown, whole or minimally processed foods, especially foods from priority food producers, to incorporate into school meal programs, paired with complementary standards aligned hands-on food education
- ❖ **Farm to School Standards Aligned Hands-on Food Education** Increase capacity to deliver standards aligned hands-on food education to TK-12 CA public school students
- ❖ **Farm to School Readiness and Planning for Producers** Increase capacity for priority producers to sell foods to the school food market
- ❖ **Tribal Farm to School** Increase capacity to implement farm to school programming in tribal communities, including for producers, schools, childcare centers, or other relevant projects
- ❖ **Farm to Early Care and Education** Increase capacity of eligible entities to deliver hands-on food education and/or local food procurement initiatives



Track 2: F2S Technical Assistance (TA) Grant (eligibility)

F2S Technical Assistance Organizations

Definition: Any of the following orgs that (a) have an established history supporting California SFAs or California educators with implementing farm to school initiatives or (b) have an established history supporting California food producers and institutional food procurement:

- ❖ Non-profit organizations, including agricultural industry non-profit organizations
- ❖ Tribal-based non-profit organizations
- ❖ Resource Conservation Districts in CA
- ❖ UC ANR and UC Cooperative Extension county offices
- ❖ Public universities in CA
- ❖ California Native American Tribes
- ❖ County agencies and local governments in CA
- ❖ Projects with a non-profit fiscal sponsor

NOTE: Food hubs are not eligible. See Track 3 instead.

Established history requirement: See T2 RFA section 1.6a for established history requirements by track 2 category



Track 2: F2S Technical Assistance (TA) Grant (details)

Grant Term: Up to 18 months; exact dates to be released in final RFA

Award Amounts: \$500k to \$1.5mill dependent on T2 category

Allowable Costs: anything you need to build school nutrition, educator, or producer capacity to implement farm to school programs:

- ❖ Supplies, equipment and infrastructure
- ❖ Subawards
- ❖ F2S staff
- ❖ Travel
- ❖ Contractors
- ❖ Indirect

*Track 2 projects are required **to use 70% of funds** for subawards directly and work directly supporting outreach and technical assistance to applicants of subawards.*



Track 2: F2S Technical Assistance (TA) Grant (app/scoring)

Application Overview	Points
Foundational Information	--
Project Title + Summary	--
Project Team	--
Organizational + Farm to School History	20
Participation in Farm to School Evaluation Work	10
Ability to Manage Subawards	25
Community Collaboration Matrix	25
Project Workplan	10
Project Budget	10
Additional Applicant Information	--
Total	100

Full application package includes

- ❖ Completed application questions
- ❖ Project budget
- ❖ Project workplan
- ❖ Community Collaboration Matrix



Track 2: Note about project examples

Project example not available.

The proposed structure of Track 2 for cohort 4 differs from the previous Track 2 structures.



Track 3: F2S Producer Grant (overview)

Track 3 will fund California food producers and food hubs to increase production, processing, and/or distribution capacity to sell California grown or produced, whole or minimally processed foods to the school food market.

Funding will prioritize small to midsize food producers; veteran, socially disadvantaged, and/or limited-resource food producers; and food producers utilizing climate smart agriculture practices or production systems.



Track 3: F2S Producer Grant (eligibility)

CA Food Producers

OR

Food Hub

Definition: A person, group of individuals, non-profit organization, or California Native American Tribe that leases, rents, or owns land in California (whether the land is publicly owned, privately owned, or Tribal land) and cultivates crops, raises livestock, and/or uses Indigenous food production practices on this land, **and/or** a California seafood harvester.

Note: Applicants who are current grantees of the CDFA Track 2 Farm to Community Food Hubs Grant are not eligible to apply as a food hub entity for the Track 3 Farm to School Incubator Grant. If the applicant is also a producer, they may apply as a producer applicant.

Definition: Often called a “food hub,” this entity serves as a supply chain intermediary for local or regional farms or ranches, particularly those optimizing climate smart agriculture production practices or methods and following state labor practices. An eligible enterprise must prioritize to the greatest extent possible, but is not limited to, serving farms or ranches that are 500 acres or less; cooperatively owned; or owned by farmers who are socially disadvantaged, beginning, limited resource, veterans, or disabled. Additionally, an eligible enterprise must handle 100% CA grown products within CA or be able to farm identify sourcing for 100% of products to ensure state dollars support CA farms and ranches.



Track 3: F2S Producer Grant (eligibility continued)

Applicants must:

1) Provide evidence of past school sales

- ❖ Submission of purchase orders, invoices, and/or sales receipts.
- ❖ Evidence provided must be the most recent sales and must be between the years of 2024-2026.
- ❖ Evidence must show a minimum of \$5,000 in sales to schools.

2) Provide evidence of collaboration

- ❖ Producer applicants must provide a letter of intent from the director of the school meal program at each School Food Authority or Child Care Center that the applicant identifies as a project partner. Food hub applicants must provide three letters of intent.



Track 3: F2S Producer Grant (details)

Grant Term: Up to 18 months; exact dates to be released in final RFA

Award Amounts: \$20k to \$200k

Allowable Costs: anything you need to increase capacity to sell CA Grown food to schools and, if desired, to provide hands-on food education to schools:

- ❖ Equipment/infrastructure/supplies to: increase production/processing/distribution capacity to sell food to schools, establish/enhance use of climate smart ag practices for school food, establish/expand hands-on food education opportunities for students or school staff (e.g., farm field trips) that complement food sales
- ❖ Staffing costs dedicated to farm to school work
- ❖ Certifications, licensures, or insurance needed to sell food to schools (e.g., food safety)
- ❖ Travel, Contractors, Indirect



Track 3: F2S Producer Grant (app/scoring)

Full application package includes

- ❖ Completed application questions
- ❖ Project Work Plan
- ❖ Project Budget
- ❖ Required Uploads
 - ❖ Evidence of school food sales (purchase orders, invoices, and/or sales receipts)
 - ❖ Five photos, diagrams, crop plans, etc. Of your production and/or storage space and a description of each photo
 - ❖ Letters of Intent (three for food hub applicants, one for producer applicants)
 - ❖ For food hubs:
 - ❖ Operations Processes
 - ❖ Facility Map
 - ❖ Food Safety Plan
 - ❖ List of all suppliers for farm to school sales
 - ❖ Food hub producer sourcing network
 - ❖ For Producers:
 - ❖ Farm/Facility Map
 - ❖ Minimal Processing SOPs
 - ❖ Food Safety Plan
 - ❖ Well Water Test
 - ❖ Optional: GAP Certification
 - ❖ Optional: Food Safety Training

Application Overview	Points
Foundational Information	0
Proposed Project	50
Producer Applicant Organizational Information	50
Food Hub Applicant Organizational Information	50
Additional Applicant Information	--
Total	100



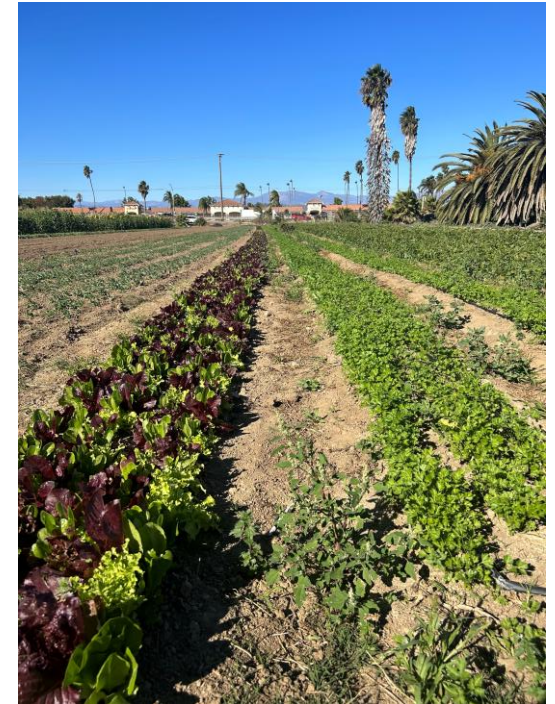
Track 3: 2022 Project Example

Grantee: Madera's Queen Honey

Award Amount: \$335k

Project Activities:

- ❖ Purchasing infrastructure and equipment to scale up farm to school production
- ❖ Educational talks about bees and honey production to students and staff
- ❖ Partnering with local school districts



Estimated Timeline

- ❖ **August 20 – September 11, 2026:** public comment period
- ❖ **Estimated October 2026:** applications open (online portal)
- ❖ **Weekly throughout app period:** Q&A Zoom sessions
- ❖ **Estimated December 31, 2026:** applications due
- ❖ **Estimated January - March 2027:** review process
- ❖ **Award notification/announcement:** date to be released in final RFA
- ❖ **Grant term begins:** date to be released in final RFA



Questions/Comments?

Please keep your question or comment to under 2 minutes

A helpful comment is:

- *Specific to an aspect of the grant*
- *Related to the grant process, not a specific project*
- **Example of a helpful comment:** *The maximum award for Track # is too low based on current costs of X – a more helpful award amount would be \$X. This would enable our organization to XYZ.*

Visit the program webpage to learn more:

<https://www.cdfa.ca.gov/caf2sgrant/>

Submit written comments to: Cohort 4 F2S

[Incubator Grant Public Comment Submission Form](#)
by 5pm PT on September 11th, 2026

