

2021 California Farm to School Incubator Grant Program

Request for Applications

Released for Public Comment:
November 13, 2020

Public Comments Due:
by 5pm PT on December 4, 2020
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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Stakeholder Input

The California Department of Food and Agriculture (CDFA) seeks comments about this Request for Applications (RFA). Comments received will be considered before this Farm to School RFA is made final and when developing future Farm to School RFA's. Written comments should be submitted via email to: cafarmtofork@cdfa.ca.gov. Include "Farm to School Stakeholder Comments" in the subject line of your email.

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.

There are two funding tracks.

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

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 local procurement, 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 school district enrollment. For small school districts (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 during the 2018-19 school year multiplied by twelve (.12) cents per meal. For all other school districts (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 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.
- 70% of grant award total must be used to reimburse procurement of new, whole or minimally processed California grown or produced foods, and 30% of grant award total must be used to integrate farm to school education and procurement programs.
 - 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 project term is 2 years, 9 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, applicants will fund the project and submit 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. Matching funds are not required.
- The maximum grant project term is 2 years, 9 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 Educational Agencies within California that operate National School Lunch Programs.
 - A Local Educational 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.
- **The CA Farm to School Regional Partnerships Grant** will be available for LEAs and farm to school partners (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)
 - Partnerships must include at least two LEA's and one regional partner.
 - One applicant will act as project lead, while additional partners must provide letters of commitment.

Reporting

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

- Submit monthly invoices to CDFA detailing local procurement to be reimbursed for actual allowable costs incurred
- 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 local 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 quarterly reports on project integration
- Submit monthly or quarterly invoices to CDFA detailing spending and providing documentation to substantiate costs
- 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

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 support/commitment and in the application under section “Description of Farm to School History and Programming.”

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 labor cost associated with processing and procuring new local food products
 - Up to 10% of the total award can be used for kitchen infrastructure to support utilization of local products in school nutrition programs
 - Up to 10% of indirect costs
- Unallowable costs:
 - Because the grant seeks to expand the amount of new local products utilized in school nutrition, CA produced milk and bread will not be reimbursed. However, dairy products like yogurt and specialty bread products like rolls or buns are allowable expenses.
 - Travel costs

Track 2: The CA Farm to School Regional Partnerships Grant:

- Allowable costs:
 - Indirect costs - Up to 10%
- Unallowable costs:
 - Travel costs

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
- Description of Farm to School History and Programming
- School District Data: Size, demographic information, Free/Reduced Meal Rate, etc.
- School Nutrition Data: Number of sites, participation rate, programs offered, etc.
- California Procurement Baseline: Includes CA-Produced food items purchased in 18-19 school year, type of item, quantity of item, total weight purchased, purchasing source, purchasing method (direct/indirect)
- Project Narrative: Includes project description, timeline, evaluation plan
- Budget Timeline
- Farm to School Partners and at least two Letters of Support

Track Two: California Farm to School Regional Partnerships Grant:

- Project Overview: Project Summary, Project Partner Data, Farm to School History and Programming
- Project Narrative: Includes project description, timeline, evaluation plan
- Budget Timeline
- Farm to School Partners and Letters of Commitment from all partners; Letters of Support from other parties optional

Review Criteria

CDFA seeks to fund applications that:

- Serve California's highest need communities
- Have a history of farm to school success and/or a thorough, viable plan in place and evidence of strong, effective partnerships
- Incorporate culturally relevant foods
- Programs will increase local procurement and collaboration between regional farm to school partners
- Will be sustained beyond the duration of the grant
- CDFA also encourages partnerships with producers that identify as: small or medium sized farms; BIPOC (Black, Indigenous, and People of Color); women-owned; LGBTQ+, Veteran owned, from socially disadvantaged farmers or ranchers
 - Socially disadvantaged farmers or ranchers definition (USDA): This term means a farmer or rancher who is a member of a socially disadvantaged group. Specifically, a group whose members have been subjected to racial or ethnic

prejudice because of their identity as members of a group without regard to their individual qualities. Those groups include African Americans, American Indians, or Alaskan natives, Hispanics, and Asians or Pacific Islanders.

CDFA also encourages partnerships with producers that have demonstrated and documented climate smart practices. Climate smart practices include, but are not limited to: organic or transitioning to organic and regenerative agriculture, participating in the state's Healthy Soils Program or in programs aligned with the state's Healthy Soil Program practices, and/or certified 100% grass-fed; reduced or no use of synthetic (fossil-fuel derived) pesticides and fertilizers; diverse crop rotations; cover cropping; hedgerow plantings; composting; managed grazing; and other 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 underground.

Late applications will not be accepted. Grant applications must be submitted electronically to cafarmtofork@cdfa.ca.gov. All application questions must be answered. Submitted applications will only be considered if the required application form is complete and attached along with any additional attachments in **one email submission**. Please use "2021 Farm to School Incubator Grant Application" in the subject line. Attachments may be submitted in Microsoft Word (doc/docx), Adobe (pdf), or Microsoft Excel (xls/xlsx) format. Mailed and faxed applications will not be accepted. Applicants will receive a confirmation email within two business days of submission. Please contact the Office of Farm to Fork via email at cafarmtofork@cdfa.ca.gov if a confirmation email is not received.

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.

Timeline

CA Farm to School Innovation Grant Timeline (tentative)	
Invitation to Submit Grant Applications	December 11, 2020
CDFA Grant Application Webinar	December 17, 2020
Grant Applications Due	February 11, 2021
Review Process	February - March 2021
Award Announcement	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 CDFA Office of Farm to Fork, Farm to School Program Manager, Nick Anicich by email at Nicholas.anicich@cdfa.ca.gov.

The Office of Farm to Fork will conduct one webinar on the CA Farm to School Incubator Grant Program RFA on December 17th, 2020 at 1pm PT. To register for the webinar, please email cafarmtofork@cdfa.ca.gov.