



USDA Farm to School Funding

IMPROVE YOUR GREEN SCHOOLYARD PROJECT WITH USDA FUNDS

The USDA-funded Farm to School grant program offers annual, competitively awarded grants that support planning, developing, and implementing farm to school programs, including edible school gardens.

ELIGIBLE GREEN SCHOOLYARD ELEMENTS

Incorporating an edible garden in your green schoolyard provides students with opportunities for hands-on learning, interaction with nature, and mindfulness activities, and can help mitigate food insecurity. Farm to School can support school gardens in a number of ways, including their development, planning, and through equipment purchases, operations, and training.



Photo Credit: NASA

APPLICATION PROCESS

Applicants are asked to submit their application through the grants.gov system. If this is your first time applying to a federal grant, your organization will need to register for a DUNS number and with the federal System for Awards Management (SAM) prior to creating your grants.gov account.

There are two application tracks: Turnkey and Implementation/State Agency. The Turnkey track is the most straightforward route for funding an edible schoolyard garden. Applicants will need to provide a description of school background and need, and project narrative and budget narrative following USDA's templates. See [here](#) for application templates.

APPLICATION + FUNDING TIMELINE

Requests for application typically open annually in November with a submittal deadline in mid-January. Awards are announced in mid-July.

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FREQUENTLY ASKED QUESTIONS

What does it take to make my Farm to School program a success?

Successful programs are well-thought out and written down. They require strong buy-in and support from a team of dedicated staff.

How does USDA prioritize projects?

The following project applicants and projects are prioritized by USDA:

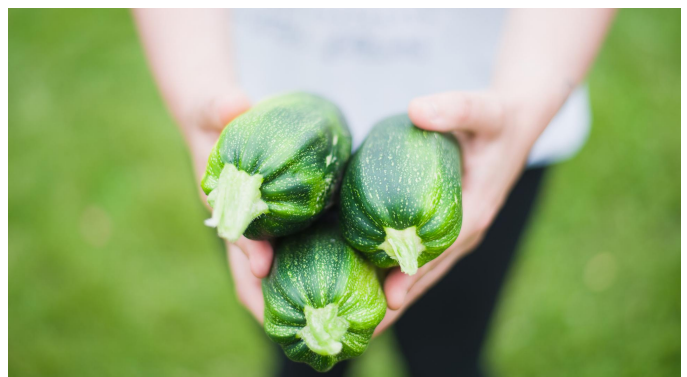
1. Applicants serve a high proportion (>40%) of students eligible for free or reduced school lunch
2. Applicants that are
 - a. an ag producer / group
 - b. a Tribal Organization or entity staffed / led by Native Americans serving Native Americans communities
 - c. an organization or entity staffed / led by Black / African individuals serving Black / African communities, and / or
 - d. an organization or entity staffed / led by POC serving POC communities
3. Project is located in and serving eligible schools/sites in an Opportunity Zone or rural area

How do I calculate my required match?

Farm to School grantees are required to provide a 25% match for their project. Use [USDA's Match Calculator Tool \(Excel\)](#) to calculate your required match.

Is my school classified by USDA as urban or rural?

To determine your school's classification, visit the National Center for Education Statistics online tool. Read more about how to [use the tool here](#).



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FREQUENTLY ASKED QUESTIONS

What other resources are available?

USDA provides a [wide variety of resources on their website](#) for Farm to School grantees and applicants, including census data, checklists, webinars, planning toolkits, templates, and descriptions of past awards. Past and current grantees have found the webinars to be particularly helpful.

What is required for the Turnkey application track?

1. Choose from four (4) project types - including edible gardens (12 month timeline, up to \$50,000)
2. Three (3) application parts: Need, Narrative, Budget Narrative (3 page limit)
3. Must complete some required activities (ie: mandatory grantee training)
4. One-page letter of commitment from at least one and no more than three (3) of the most important community organizations, farms, and/or businesses that will be involved in the project
5. One-page resume for up to three (3) staff who will be paid using grant funds

[See FY21 Request for Applications \(RFA\).](#)



Photo Credit: U.S. Government

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EDIBLE GARDEN PROJECT PLAN TEMPLATE

TURNKEY GRANT TRACK - EDIBLE GARDEN PROJECT PLAN TEMPLATE

The following table offers USDA's standard template that can be copied and pasted into a Farm to School application.

A: Required Activity (do not edit)	B: List tasks required to accomplish activity	C: Responsible party for each task	D: Proposed Timeline
Attend one-time training meeting (Grantee Gathering) with USDA personnel.			
Establish or convene an edible garden team, with diverse leadership and membership that reflects the community served, including representation from school/site foodservice professionals.			
Establish a vision, goals, and objectives for the edible garden project, including how the project will increase access to local foods, how it will be used for agricultural education, and how it will be maintained and sustained beyond the grant project.			
Identify and comply with any applicable Federal, State, and/or local regulations.			
Develop a garden food safety plan.			
Determine how processing and storage of school garden foods will take place.			
Carry out the edible garden project including procuring supplies and installation.			
Conduct an evaluation of the project.			

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