**USDA Farm to School Grants**

April 2012

**Brief Summary**

**For Specific Farm to School Grant Program Details, Please Refer to the RFA**

Prepared by Deborah Kane, National Director, USDA Farm to School Program

*(**Deborah.Kane@fns.usda.gov* *or 503.326.2010 with questions)*

**Background**

The Healthy, Hunger-Free Kids Act of 2010 (HHFKA) established a Farm to School program in order to assist eligible entities, through grants and technical assistance, in implementing farm to school programs that improve access to local foods in eligible schools. To fulfill the farm to school mandate in the HHFKA, effective October 1, 2012, $5 million will be provided to the United States Department of Agriculture (USDA) on an annual basis to support grants, technical assistance, and the Federal administrative costs related to USDA’s farm to school program.

**Amount Available in the First Funding Round**

The USDA Food & Nutrition Service (FNS) is charged with implementing the farm to school program. In this first funding cycle, FNS anticipates awarding up to $3.5 million in grant funding to support efforts that improve access to local foods in eligible schools. It is anticipated that the remaining $1.5 million will support a combination of training and technical assistance, administrative costs, and/or additional farm to school grants.

**Two Types of Grants**

Grant funds will be made available on a competitive basis, subject to availability of Federal funds. In this first funding round, USDA will solicit applications for two types of grants:

1. **Planning grants** are intended for school districts just getting started on farm to school activities and are intended to help school districts or schools organize and structure their farm to school efforts for maximum impact by embedding known best practices into early design considerations.

*Who can apply:*

* K-12 School Food Authorities, nonprofit private schools, charter schools, Indian tribal schools, and others that participate in the National School Lunch or Breakfast Programs.
1. **Implementation grants** are intended to scale or further develop existing farm to school initiatives.*Who can apply*:
* K-12 School Food Authorities, nonprofit private schools, charter schools, Indian tribal schools, and others that participate in the National School Lunch or Breakfast Programs,
* State and local agencies,
* Indian tribal organizations,
* Agricultural producers or groups of agricultural producers, and
* Non-profit entities.

**Priority Consideration Given to High Free/Reduced Price Meal Enrollment**

Given the HHFKA mandate that priority consideration be given to schools serving a high proportion of children who are eligible for free or reduced price meals, projects that serve school districts and schools that have high free and reduced price meal enrollment will receive extra points in evaluation scoring.

**Funding Amounts and Expected Distribution of Awards**

Planning grants are expected to range from $20,000 - $45,000 and represent approximately 25 percent of the total awards. Implementation grants are expected to range from $65,000 - $100,000 and represent approximately 75 percent of the total awards.

**A Match is Required, Evaluation Too**

For both types of grants, the applicant must provide at least 25 percent of the costs of the grant project as the Federal share of costs for this grant cannot exceed 75 percent of the total cost of the project, as required by the HHFKA. Authorizing language also states that as a condition of receiving a farm to school grant, each grant recipient shall cooperate in an evaluation of the program carried out using grant funds.

**Pick One, Then Think about Partnering**

Applicants must choose between submitting a Planning grant or an Implementation grant. Only one application per eligible entity is permitted. As appropriate, USDA encourages school districts, and other eligible entities, to work together and submit “cluster” applications where a USDA investment in, for example, one school district working with several districts, might benefit a wider geographic area than funding to any one district, or eligible entity, alone.

**How To Access the Request for Applications (RFA)**

The RFA will be posted on USDA’s [Farm to School website](http://www.fns.usda.gov/cnd/f2s/) and available at [www.grants.gov](http://www.grants.gov). Note that grants.gov will be unavailable for scheduled maintenance April 28-29, 2012. Read the [Grants.gov Blog](http://grants-gov.blogspot.com/2012/02/system-downtime-april-28-29-2012.html) for more information.

**Important Dates**

* April 17, 2012: Request for Applications Released
* May 18, 2012: (Suggested) Letter of Intent Deadline
* June 15, 2012: Proposals Due
* (Pending the Availability of Federal Funds) Shortly after October 1, 2012: Awards Announced and Funds Available

**Webinars to Learn More:**

Two webinars will be offered so that grant applicants can learn more about this grant opportunity. To receive additional information about webinars, please be sure to register for the [Farm to School Listserve](https://public.govdelivery.com/accounts/USFNS/subscriber/new?topic_id=USFNS_118).

* Tuesday, May 15th, 1:00 EST Implementation grants
* Thursday, May 17th, 1:00 EST Planning grants

**Don’t Wait for a Webinar to Get Your Question Answered**

You can get your question answered at any point in the process by contacting:

Deborah Kane, National Director, Farm to School Program, Food & Nutrition Services (FNS)

Deborah.Kane@fns.usda.gov or 503.326.2010

Gregory Walton, Grants Management Specialist, FNS

Greg.Walton@fns.usda.gov or 703.305.1575

**More Info Coming, Send Us Feedback**

To receive updates on USDA’s plans for farm to school training and technical assistance, or any aspect of the USDA farm to school program, please see the USDA [Farm to School website](http://www.fns.usda.gov/cnd/f2s/) or subscribe to the [Farm to School Listserve](https://public.govdelivery.com/accounts/USFNS/subscriber/new?topic_id=USFNS_118).

Given the newness of this program, and the great benefits associated with stakeholder engagement, feedback regarding the preliminary grant program design, as well as ideas and comments regarding the allocation of the remaining $1.5 million in available resources, are encouraged and expected. Please submit feedback by July 15, 2012 to f2sfeedback@fns.usda.gov with the subject header: F2S Feedback.