

Food Access Expansion Grant Program

Request for Interest **Due October 30, 2023**

Background & Purpose

The New York State Fiscal Year 2023-24 enacted budget allocates \$10 million dollars to the NYS Department of Agriculture and Markets (the Department) to improve food access infrastructure in underserved communities.

The purpose of the Food Access Expansion Grant Program is to improve food access to healthy, locally grown, and affordable foods in underserved communities. The program aims to support the establishment of farm markets, supermarkets, food cooperatives, and other similar retail food opportunities, and supporting infrastructure in underserved communities and regions of the state. The program will provide expansion capital or initial start-up capital for retail food stores or other models of retail food delivery that can create new access points for local markets, shorten supply chains, promote equitable food access and support local producers.

The Department is issuing this Request for Interest to gather information on how to best design this program. Respondents must specify whether they are interested in Program Administration or Project Implementation.

*****This RFI is only intended to gather information for future decision making and will not result in a contract.*****

Interested respondents may submit a Letter of Interest (LOI) for one or both of the following opportunities. Please submit two, separate LOIs if applying for both opportunities.

1. Administer the Food Access Expansion Grant Program statewide or in a designated geographic area. The administrator will run a competitive grant program to disperse funding; or
2. Project Implementation of a food access expansion project.

Funding Source:

The New York State Budget FY 2023-24 provides \$10,000,000 for this program. Food Access Expansion Grant projects must be used for capital infrastructure and awardees will provide a 25% match of project costs.

Available Funding

1. Program Administrator: A total of \$10,000,000 is available for this Grant Program.

Administrative costs will be limited to 15% of the award. Administrators may begin billing for administrative costs upon execution of the contract. Funds for food access infrastructure projects selected through a competitive process will be dispersed to the administrator upon sub-contracting with awardees and is to be held in an interest-bearing account.

2. Food Access Projects: Infrastructure projects submitted for direct implementation are capped at a maximum of \$3,000,000 per project.

Eligible Entities

1. Program Administrator Awards:

- Nonprofit organizations
- Public benefit corporations
- Local or regional development corporations
- Cooperatives
- City, county, municipal government entities
- Economic development organizations (IDAs, local or regional development corporations)

2. Food Access Expansion Project Awards:

- For-profit retail stores located within New York State that serve food- insecure areas
- Not-for-profit organizations
- Cooperative food retail businesses
- Local or regional development corporations
- Cooperatives
- City, county, municipal government entities
- Economic development organizations

Ineligible Entities

- Individuals

Eligible Projects

1. Program Administrators

The Program Administrator will be responsible for day-to-day administration of the program, including, but not limited to:

- Developing, in conjunction with the Department, the competitive request for proposals
- Conducting educational/promotional activity of the grant opportunity
- Accepting, evaluating and awarding proposals
- Executing and administering contracts with awarded applicants
- Project and fiscal oversight and
- Quarterly reporting to the Department

2. Food Access Expansion Projects

Food access projects must implement practices or approaches to overcome food access barriers. They must have a continued direct benefit to local food insecure communities with a focus on creating new access points for markets, shortening supply chains, and promoting equitable food access. Only direct capital infrastructure projects are eligible, including but not limited to the establishment of retail farm markets, supermarkets, food cooperatives, and other similar retail food opportunities, along with supporting infrastructure in underserved communities and regions of the state.

Submitting a Letter of Interest:

Respondents must identify which of the two **opportunities (Program Administrator or Direct Project Implementation)** listed below they are expressing interest.

1. Submissions to be a Program Administrator:

Eligible entities interested in administering the Food Access Grants Program should submit a letter of interest consisting of a short (1 page) description of:

- Organization name and contact information
- Organizational type & eligibility
- Experience in providing financial assistance in form of loans or grants
- Mission and scope of services your organization provides.
- Ability to help applicants secure additional match funding
- Organization's demonstrated ability to work with local producers, organizations, and community groups.
- Experience with food access projects or infrastructure development
- Amount of grant funds the organization would request to administer

This program may be administered statewide or in one or more specific regions.

Please specify the geographic area intended to cover by either choosing from the list below or writing down the geographic area of their interest.

Regions (based on Regional Economic Development Regions)	Yes	No
Southern Tiers		
Finger lakes		
Western New York		
Central New York		
Long Island		
New York City		
Mid-Hudson		
Mohawk Valley		
Capital District		
North Country		
Other geographic areas (please specify)		

2. Submission of Food Access Expansion Projects

Infrastructure projects' goals must align with the Food Access Expansion Grant Program's mission to fight food insecurity in underserved communities and commit to create accessibility and affordability of locally grown food.

Eligible entities interested in receiving a Food Access grant must submit a letter of interest consisting of a short (1 page) description of:

- Organization and contact information
- Organization's experience in the following area(s): food access work, retail food establishments, procurement, and supply chains
- High level description of project, including location
- Description of food insecure community being served
- Potential project partners
- Approximate amount of funding requested
- Expected sources of additional funding, if necessary

The statement should be emailed to Fatou Kandji at fatou.kandji@agriculture.ny.gov by 3:00PM on October 30, 2023. Please use the subject line "Food Access Expansion Grant Program 2023-24."

An informational webinar will be held Thursday, October 5 at 2:00 p.m.

Questions may be submitted to fatou.kandji@agriculture.ny.gov