| Question and Answer Document for RFP0378<br>(Farm to School 2026) | |
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| **Question** | **Answer** |
| *"Where can I find the RFP/Information Webinar for this grant opportunity?"* | You can find the RFP, Program Specific Questions, and Information Webinar recording at our Department's website page for this grant opportunity:<br><br>https://agriculture.ny.gov/rfp-0378-new-york-state-farm-school-grant-program-2026 |
| *"Our non-profit organization advocates for the importance of native, non-edible plants and pollinators – is there a way we could apply?"* | The objective of the New York State Farm to School Grant Program is to fund projects that aim to increase one or more school food program's purchases of New York State food products for use in regular school food menus.<br><br>An agricultural education component that highlights the importance of native plants and pollinators would be acceptable but would need to be secondary to the goal of increasing a targeted school food program's purchases of locally produced foods. |
| *"Are previous awardees of this grant program, including organizations still completing previously awarded projects, eligible to apply?* | Previous awardees, including those still completing awarded Farm to School projects, are eligible to apply and be awarded for the current round of funding.<br><br>Awardees with active, previously awarded Farm to School projects should only request funding in their proposals for items that will not overlap with the items in the budget of a still-active contract.<br><br>For example, if a previous awardee through the Farm to School Competitive Grants Program was granted a contract term extension to June 30 of 2027, and that project funds a Farm to School Coordinator salaried position through that end date, any newly submitted proposal by that awardee would only be eligible to request continued funds for such a position beginning after the end term date of the previous contract. |
| *"Am I, an individual, eligible to apply for this grant?"* | No – per the RFP criteria, private individuals are not eligible entities to apply for this grant opportunity. |

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| *"Do MWBE forms need to be submitted along with the application?"* | No – if your project proposal is selected for an award, your organization will be required to submit the required MWBE forms prior to the execution of the award contract. |
| *"Does this grant opportunity require our organization to submit a Letter of Intent?"* | No, there is no requirement or allowance for submission of supporting materials outside of the SFS application portal. |
| *"Can pre-schools or non-profits focused on pre-schools apply for this grant?"* | An eligible proposal must target a school food program serving Kindergarten through Grade 12 (K-12) students. If the same targeted school food program serving K-12 students also serves a pre-school or early education program, it would not disqualify the application, however the intention of this grant funding is specifically to target K-12 school food programming.<br><br>An application which only targets a pre-school food program would not be eligible for consideration. |
| *"Can grant funds be used for food purchases?"* | No - per the RFP criteria, food purchases are not an eligible expense. If the project proposal include taste testing or recipe development that involves procuring food, grant funds may be used to purchase relevant supplies and materials to support those activities. |
| *"Are non-profits incorporated in a different state eligible to apply for this grant?"* | Non-profit organizations based outside of New York State are eligible to apply if the organization is recognized as a non-profit by New York State and is otherwise eligible to be registered and pre-qualified as a Supplier in the State Financial System.<br><br>The project proposal would need to conform to the objectives of targeting New York State school food programming for increased purchases of New York State produced foods. |
| *"In the 'Quantification of Project Benefits' section of the Evaluation Criteria, what does 'availability of New York State farm products on menu' mean? Does this refer to the number of menu items using NYS farm products, the number of NYS farm products purchased, or some other definition?* | This grant seeks to boost the percentage of local food purchases for school food programming, relative to the overall amount of funds spent. The objective should be to get a school lunch program closer to qualifying for the "30% Initiative," which quantifies that benchmark as "at least 30% of lunch costs are made up of eligible New York products." |

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| *"If my district is already at/above the 30% target (and proposing to increase that percent further), are we still eligible to apply?* | Yes - if the school district you are targeting in an application has already been qualifying for the NYS 30% Initiative, that district is still eligible to be the target of an application for these grant funds. You should provide justification in your application narrative for how additional funding through this grant would continue to strengthen your school food programming and local community by continuing to sustain or increase local food purchases |
| *"Would purchasing freezer or cooler infrastructure to store food outside the growing season be an eligible expense for this funding?"* | Yes - this could be considered an eligible expense as part of a project proposal, although the strength of that proposal in the scoring process depends on your ability to justify to the technical evaluators of the application how this would improve the school food program's ability to procure and serve more locally-sourced (NYS-origin) foods and food products.<br><br>The amount of funds being requested for the equipment, the proportion of those funds to the overall amount being applied for, and what other funded elements are included in the proposal to directly support putting that storage infrastructure to use are factors that the technical evaluators will be considering in their scoring. |
| *"Is an organization considered a "first-time awardee" if it has an active grant through a different program with New York State Department of Agriculture and Markets?"* | Yes – other grants awarded to an organization by our Department do not have any bearing on that organization's status as a "first-time awardee" through the Farm to School Competitive Grants Program. |
| *"Would a proposal for a non-profit to grow food in a school (e.g. hydroponically or in an outside school garden) be eligible for funding?"* | The objective of the Farm to School Competitive Grants Program is to bring the targeted school/district closer to qualifying for the 30% Initiative, which measures local food purchases relative to overall food budget.<br><br>Foods grown directly by an applicant organization and donated to a school food program would not be considered as meeting the program objectives, which is to increase the market for local food products through increased purchases for school food programming.<br><br>A school garden project component is considered an acceptable agricultural education element of a proposal, but would not be considered eligible as the primary focus of a proposal for this grant funding. |

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| *"Are individual K-12 public schools eligible to apply (vs. school districts)?"* | Yes, individual K-12 schools within a district can apply. The scope and budget of the project should reflect the population being served and be adequately justified in the application narrative. |
| *"Is a project eligible if a municipality is acting as the fiscal sponsor?"* | Only organizations meeting the criteria described in the RFP document are eligible to apply, and the applicant organization would be responsible for the administration of the grant project. Sub-grants are not permitted. The project itself would need to target an eligible school food program and meet all the relevant RFP criteria. |
| *"How do I apply?"* | All applications must be submitted through the Grants Management portal of the State Financial System. Please read the RFP for more details.<br><br>If you need help getting your organization registered and pre-qualified as a Supplier in SFS, please contact the SFS Help Desk for support:<br><br>helpdesk@sfs.ny.gov<br><br>(518) 457-7717 or (855) 233-8363 (toll free) |
| *"Can a not-for-profit camp apply for this grant?"* | An eligible project proposal needs to target a K-12 School Food Program. A proposal to fund food programming at camp program would not be eligible. |
| *"Can these grant funds be used to support pilot testing of New York State–grown products?"* | Direct food purchases are not eligible expenses under this grant program, but funds may be used to support taste testing and recipe development of New York State food products through the purchase of related and necessary supplies and materials to conduct those activities. |
| *"Is it allowable to use grant funds to purchase and distribute kitchen or storage equipment across multiple participating school districts as part of a single county-led Farm-to-School project?"* | Yes, there is no limit to the number of schools that a project proposal may target. When providing a budget narrative for equipment purchases, it is important that an application is able to describe and justify how the equipment will contribute towards meeting this grant program's goals for the school it is being purchased for. |
| *If a charter school currently uses a food vendor for all its campuses, is it still eligible to apply if their project focuses on other objectives like agricultural/nutrition education?* | The objective of any eligible Farm to School Program grant proposal must be to increase the amount of NYS-produced foods purchased and served by a k-12 school food program. Agricultural and nutritional education cannot be the primary focus of an eligible proposal.<br><br>If the school already has a dedicated food service vendor, an eligible proposal would be to focus on increasing procurement of local (NYS-based) food products within the vendor's distribution network. |

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| *"Can a project focusing on 'increasing the amount of variety of New York State farm products' achieve this with offering a 'farm box' to each family at the school once a month that contain fresh fruits, vegetables and grains?"* | No, the objective of an eligible proposal must focus on increasing the volume of locally-sourced (NYS-produced) foods being purchased and served during regular school food programming (breakfast, lunch, and snacks served during regular school attendance hours). |
| *"What are some examples of 'permanent physical or structural improvement' that would be eligible?"* | This refers to construction costs related to renovation or expansion of school food kitchen facilities, such as wiring or re-wiring for specific equipment, build-out of walk-in coolers and freezers, building out additional square footage to accommodate operations that would expand the kitchen's ability to process more local food products, or any other structural changes required to accommodate new equipment. |
| *"What are examples of eligible supplies and equipment expenses for this grant funding?"* | Supplies could be items needed to conduct taste-testing, consumable storage supplies such as vacuum seal or freezer bags, or items related to agricultural education lessons. Equipment would be any kitchen machinery that would assist in the school food program's ability to store, prepare and serve more local food products, such as mixers, dicers, vacuum sealers, fridges and freezers, knives, cookers and chillers. |
| *"The Request for Proposal advises 'The contract will incorporate project details and a budget approved by the Department among its provisions'. Are these provisions outside the details that have already been supplied in the request?"* | The program-specific provisions for a contract awarded through this grant program are described in the RFP document, such as the length of the contract terms, its starting and ending dates, reporting requirements, terms for advance requests and claims for payment. Other "provisions" refer to the standard clauses and requirements NYS includes in all its grant contracts.<br><br>In the section following the one quoted (Section 9.B - New York State Master Contract):<br><br>*"New York State has developed a standard "Master Contract" containing standard clauses required in all State Contracts. The Master Contract will be executed for all projects awarded under the 2026 Farm-to-School Grant Program, and awardees are responsible for complying with the terms and conditions contained therein. The Master Contract can be found at:*<br><br>*https://grantsmanagement.ny.gov/system/files/documents/2025/01/nys-contract-for-grants-january-2025.pdf"* |

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| *"Would a 'backpack' program that sends students home with boxes of local food products every week be an eligible target for this grant funding?"* | No, a proposal targets a "backpack" program or any other food box program unrelated to regular school meal programming would not be considered eligible. |
| *Would community events or engagement be eligible grant activities for this program?* | No, any secondary educational activities or events proposed for this grant must focus on the students being served by this programming, and should not be oriented towards parents or the general public. |
| *"Are the 'Program Specific Questions' what we will be answering in the application portal?"* | Yes, the Evaluation Criteria section of the RFP and the Program Specific Questions align with the application prompts for this grant opportunity in SFS. |
| *"What is the character limit for the text fields where applicants answer the program questions in SFS?"* | The standard character limit for SFS text response fields is 2000. |