2024 Farm to School - Grow Ohio Grant Request for Applications

Released: March 4, 2024

Grant Proposals Due:
Wednesday, May 15, 2024, 11:59 p.m. EDT

No late submissions will be accepted.

Department of Education & Workforce

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Grant Summary

BACKGROUND

The Grow Ohio Grant is funded through the 2022 State Agency Non-Competitive Farm to School Formula Grant awarded by the United States Department of Agriculture (USDA). The objectives of the formula grant are:

1) To build and increase the capacity of participating institutions to procure and use local food in program meals; and/or
2) To provide agricultural education opportunities for participating children.

PURPOSE

The purpose of the Grow Ohio Grant program is to support National School Lunch Program (NSLP), Child and Adult Food Care Program (CACFP), and Summer Food Service Program (SFSP) sponsors in providing innovative, local level activities that create agricultural education opportunities for participating children through farm to school projects such as outdoor or indoor school gardening, hydroponics, collaborations with local food producers, and food literacy activities.

The goals of the Grow Ohio Grant program include the following:

- Create equitable opportunities for students to gain knowledge of potential careers in agriculture.
- Increase relationships between Ohio food producers and child nutrition program sponsors.
- Increase the amount of school-grown foods served in USDA meal programs.

The Grow Ohio Grant advances the Department's Future Forward objectives of providing student access to high-growth, in-demand fields and provide new opportunities for the next generation of the workforce.

PRIORITIES

The Grow Ohio Grant program will prioritize applications meeting one or more of the following:

- Focuses on workforce development and introduces students to career opportunities in food production and agriculture.
- Partners with one or more local farmers, food producers, or local food aggregators.
- Sponsors that serve children in communities with high percentages (50% or greater) of students eligible for free and reduced-price meals.

FUNDING

Grant awards range from $5,000 to $40,000. Applicants will include a Grant Budget Table found in Appendix B detailing the anticipated costs of all grant-funded expenditures in the final grant submission. A cash match is not required.

GRANT DURATION

Proposed projects must be completed by **September 30, 2025**.

GRANT TIMELINE & DEADLINES

Please note the program timeline below.

Grow Ohio Grant Timeline	
Invitation to Submit Grant Applications	March 4, 2024
Grant Application Webinars*	March 12 from 9-10 a.m.
	March 28 from 9-10 a.m.
	April 23 from 9-10a.m.
Grant Applications Due	11:59 p.m. EDT May 15, 2024
Award Notification and Announcement	July 1, 2024
Grant Term Begins	Aug. 1, 2024
Grant Term Ends	Sept. 30, 2025

* Each webinar will include an overview of the grant program and time for questions and answers. They will occur on the above dates via Microsoft Teams. To register, please visit the Training Management page of the Office of Nutrition's Claims Reimbursement and Reporting System (CRRS).

The Ohio Department of Education and Workforce is committed to providing access and inclusion and reasonable accommodation in its services, activities, programs and employment opportunities in accordance with the Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA) and other applicable laws. To request a reasonable accommodation due to a disability, please contact Aleshia McNutt, ADA coordinator, at ADAaccommodation@education.ohio.gov or (614) 387-2200 (voice) no later than seven business days before the event.

Note: The Department is not responsible for any technical or logistical problems resulting in the Department not receiving the application on time. It is the responsibility of the applicant to ensure the submission is received before the deadline. Once the application is submitted, applicants will receive a confirmation email from the Department.

HOW TO SUBMIT QUESTIONS

All questions should be submitted to Farm to School Education Program Specialist Rebecca Naab via email Rebecca.Naab@education.ohio.gov or by phone at 614-981-2371. If submitting via email, please use "IRN, Grow Ohio Grant" in the subject line. Please allow a 48-hour window for a response. All questions for the grant must be submitted by **May 13, 2024** (2 days before the deadline).

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Definitions

FARM TO SCHOOL

While individual farm to school programs vary based on their unique vision, community, and geographic region, the state of Ohio defines farm to school programs as combining: (1) child nutrition programs buying Ohio grown or produced foods for use in meal programs,
(2) educational activities that connect classroom learning with cafeteria meals, and
(3) hands -on food education opportunities in school gardens, on farms, in culinary classes, in settings that celebrate traditional foodways, and through other experiential learning pathways.

LOCAL FOOD AGGREGATORS

Organizations that gather and distribute local food items. Ex: Food hubs.

LOCAL FOOD

Per the USDA, school food authorities may define what foods are considered "local" under their own parameters. Examples could include within a specific county, within a specific mile radius, or within the state of Ohio.

OHIO DEPARTMENT OF EDUCATION AND WORKFORCE (DEW)

The state of Ohio agency that administers all federal (USDA) school nutrition programs.

PROCUREMENT

A multi-step process for obtaining goods, products, and/or service at the best possible price. At a minimum, the regulations require child nutrition sponsor to:

- Conduct procurement in a manner that promotes full and open competition.
- Develop and maintain written standards that cover conflicts of interest, including organizational conflicts of interest, and governs the performance of employees engaged in the selection, award, and administration of contracts.
- Develop and maintain written procurement procedures designed to avoid the acquisition of unnecessary or duplicative items.

SCHOOL FOOD AUTHORITY

The governing body which is responsible for the administration of one or more schools; and has the legal authority to operate the National School Lunch Program therein *or* be otherwise approved by Food and Nutrition Services to operate the National School Lunch Program.

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Grant Eligibility

ELIGIBLE APPLICANTS

Eligible applicants include all National School Lunch Program (NSLP), Child and Adult Care Food Program (CACFP), and Summer Food Service Program (SFSP) sponsors in good standing.

INELIGIBLE APPLICANTS

Ineligible applicants include the following:

- Individuals
- Private, For-Profit, or Non-Profit Organizations Not Participating in NSLP, CACFP, or SFSP
- Farmers/Ranchers, and Other Local Food Producers or Aggregators

COLLABORATION

Applicants are encouraged to collaborate with teachers and school or childcare center staff, farmers, nonprofits, parents, and other community partners to strengthen their farm to school programming and application. Only eligible sponsors may submit a grant proposal.

ELIGIBLE EXPENSES

Grant funds may be used for any of the following purposes directly related to completion of an eligible project, including but not limited to:

- Indoor or outdoor edible garden supplies and equipment
- Programming that supports food literacy, nutrition education, or access to local foods for students
- Kitchen equipment used to process locally purchased or school-grown food items
- Promotional materials including printing costs
- Student field trip(s) to local farm/food producers
- Staff trainings and professional development
- Support for student internships or other career exploration opportunities in the food or agricultural sector
- No more than five percent of the grant funds may be used for food purchases, and the use must be clearly delineated in the grant budget. Food purchases should be limited to educational purposes only, such as: farm to school sample tables, taste tests, or promotional use.

INELIGIBLE EXPENSES

The following ineligible expenses include, but are not limited to:

- Food served as part of a reimbursable meal or sold as a competitive food and beverage or fundraiser
- Expenditures incurred prior to grant period

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- Staff wages or benefits
- Meals or snacks for training or meeting attendees
- Purchase of land, buildings, or additions of permanent building structures including greenhouses
- Transportation and travel expenses
- Bad debts, late payment fees
- Fundraising
- Taxes, except sales tax on goods and services

How to Apply

Grow Ohio Grant Application

APPLICATION FORMAT

Applications are submitted via Microsoft Forms. Applicants may request a paper copy of the application by contacting Rebecca Naab at 614-981-2371 or Rebecca.Naab@education.ohio.gov. All sections of the application must be completed before the application is submitted for review.

Additionally, applicants are required to submit the provided Budget Template as part of the application process. Completed Budget Templates must be sent to Rebecca.Naab@education.ohio.gov with the subject line "IRN, Grow Ohio Grant, Budget Template" prior to grant deadline.

APPLICATION GUIDELINES
- Answer all questions completely to the best of your knowledge. Incomplete applications will be scored as such.
- Applications will be scored using the Evaluation Rubric in Appendix A of this document. Please use the rubric as a reference while completing the application.
- Any additional documentation you would like to provide as part of your application must be emailed to Rebecca.Naab@education.ohio.gov with the subject line "IRN, Grow Ohio Grant, Additional Documentation."

APPLICATION DEADLINE

Applications are due by **11:59 p.m. EDT** on **May 15, 2024**. No late applications will be accepted after the deadline. Once submitted, a confirmation email will be sent confirming your submission.

Ohio Department of Education & Workforce

Application Review

REVIEW PROCESS

A review committee composed of Department staff will evaluate all eligible applications based on the criteria in the Evaluation Rubric. Reviewers may recommend whole or partial funding of a project. The Department will notify all applicants in writing via email of the results of their application.

The Ohio Department of Education and Workforce reserves the right to ask applicants clarifying questions about their applications.

APPLICATION REVIEW TIMELINE
- Grant Applications Due: 11:59 p.m. EST May 15, 2024
- Review Process: May – June 2024
- Award Notification and Announcement: July 1, 2024

Grant Evaluation & Awarding

EVALUATION CRITERIA

All eligible proposals will be competitively rated by a panel designated by the Department. A total of one hundred (100) points can be achieved from the following criteria. A total of up to 10 additional bonus points are available for applicants that meet additional criteria listed in the Evaluation Rubric in Appendix A.

The evaluation panel will consider the following factors in rating proposals:

PROJECT SUMMARY/DESCRIPTION (25 POINTS)

- There is a clear connection on how the project will provide activities that create agricultural education opportunities for participating children. (15 pts.)

- Project incorporates one or more of the following priority areas. (10 pts.)
    - Focuses on workforce development and introduces students to career opportunities in food production and agriculture.
    - Partners with one or more local farmers, food producers, or local food aggregator.
    - Sponsors that serve children in communities with high percentages (50% or greater) of students eligible for free and reduced-price meals.

OUTCOMES (15 POINTS)
- Measurable outcomes are listed. Outcomes are realistic and can be tracked throughout the grant process. (10 pts.)
- Plan of how outcomes will be tracked and by whom. (5 pts.)

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PLAN OF WORK (15 POINTS)
- There is a clearly described plan of work including a timeline. (10 pts.)
- Specific benchmarks and deliverables have been described and are achievable. (5 pts.)

STUDENT AND COMMUNITY ENGAGEMENT (25 POINTS)
- Applicant presents a clear picture of how students will be engaged and participate in the project. (15 pts.)
- At least one or more organization(s) or individual(s) outside of the sponsor is involved in the grant project. (10 pts.)

BUDGET TEMPLATE (10 POINTS)
- Detailed list of all anticipated purchases as well as estimated costs. (5 pts.)
- All items in the budget align with the overall project objectives and goals. (5 pts.)

SUSTAINABILITY (5 POINTS)
- Clear description of how project will continue once grant funding is exhausted. (5 pts.)

COMPLETENESS (5 POINTS)
- Application filled out with no missing information. (5 pts.)

BONUS CATEGORIES (5-10 POINTS)
- Project provides component to encourage literacy and promotes statewide literacy goals. (5 pts.)
- Partnership with farmers, food producers, or community organizations are any of the following: (5 pts.)
  - Run by limited-resource farm households;
  - Minority-owned;
  - Run by small or midsize food producers (food producers whose average gross cash income during the previous 3-year period is $750,000 or less);
  - Socially disadvantaged food producers;
  - Woman-owned
  - Veteran-owned

AWARD PROCESS

The Office of Nutrition will first screen applications to ensure that they meet eligibility requirements. All proposals deemed eligible will be evaluated by a Department panel according to the evaluation criteria; scores will be averaged and ranked in order from highest to lowest. Those proposals receiving the highest numerical scores will be awarded funding until available funds are exhausted, or until all proposals are funded, whichever occurs first.

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Requirements of Grant Recipients

RECORDKEEPING & FUND REIMBURSEMENT

Awardees of this grant will be required to provide the following documentation upon expenditure and request for reimbursement:

- Invoices or purchase orders detailing item(s) purchased (including shipping & handling or any additional fees).

Awardees will submit all purchase documentation into the Claims Reporting and Reimbursement System (CRRS). Documentation will be reviewed, and claims will be processed no more than 30 days after submission.

Awardees shall retain grant files and supporting documentation for a term of three (3) years after final payment. Awardees will make these files available for review by the USDA or the Office of Nutrition upon request.

PROJECT REPORTING

Upon completion of the grant period, awardees will be asked to complete a final report (template provided by the Department) detailing the outcomes of the project, any challenges that occurred, and recommendations for future farm to school related funding.

Final reports will be due to the Department no more than 60 days after completion of the grant project.

Non-Discrimination Policy

In accordance with federal civil rights law and U.S. Department of Agriculture (USDA) civil rights regulations and policies, this institution is prohibited from discriminating on the basis of race, color, national origin, sex (including gender identity and sexual orientation), disability, age, or reprisal or retaliation for prior civil rights activity.

Program information may be made available in languages other than English. Persons with disabilities who require alternative means of communication to obtain program information (e.g., Braille, large print, audiotape, American Sign Language) should contact the responsible state or local agency that administers the program or USDA's TARGET Center at (202) 720-2600 (voice and TTY) or contact USDA through the Federal Relay Service at (800) 877-8339.

To file a program discrimination complaint, a Complainant should complete a Form AD-3027, USDA Program Discrimination Complaint Form which can be obtained online at: https://www.usda.gov/sites/default/files/documents/USDA-OASCR%20P-Complaint-Form-0508-0002-508-11-28-17Fax2Mail.pdf, from any USDA office, by calling (866) 632-9992, or by

writing a letter addressed to USDA. The letter must contain the complainant's name, address, telephone number, and a written description of the alleged discriminatory action in sufficient detail to inform the Assistant Secretary for Civil Rights (ASCR) about the nature and date of an alleged civil rights violation. The completed AD-3027 form or letter must be submitted to USDA by:

1. **mail:**
   U.S. Department of Agriculture
   Office of the Assistant Secretary for Civil Rights
   1400 Independence Avenue, SW
   Washington, D.C. 20250-9410; or
2. **fax:**
   (833) 256-1665 or (202) 690-7442; or
3. **email:**
   program.intake@usda.gov

This institution is an equal opportunity provider.

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APPENDIX A – Evaluation Rubric for Grow Ohio Grants

Evaluation Criteria – Seed Starter Mini Grant	Maximum Score
Project Summary/Description Grant projects and objectives illustrate how applicants will start farm to school programming at their organization. Project has clear goals and objectives.	25
Outcomes What measurable impact is anticipated because of the farm to school grant?	15
Plan of Work Applicant has developed a clear workplan with deadlines and demonstrates ability to complete grant project in anticipated timeline.	15
Student and Community Engagement Project engages both students and community members (families, nonprofits, local farmers, etc.) to create meaning learning experiences.	25
Budget Template The narrative is clear and as detailed as possible.	10
Sustainability Clear explanation on how grant project(s) will continue after grant cycle ends.	5
Completeness Application is filled out to its entirety with no missing areas.	5
Bonus Points	
Literacy Component	+5
Partnership with farmers or food producers from the following groups: limited-resource farm households, minority-owned, small or midsize food producers, socially disadvantaged food producers, woman-owned, veteran-owned	+5
TOTAL (Not including bonus points)	100

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APPENDIX B – Grow Ohio Grant Budget Template

Please include all anticipated expenses with estimated costs. **Total must match the total reported in Grow Ohio Grant application**. Additional pages may be added as needed. All expenses must align with the overall project goals to create equitable opportunities for students to gain knowledge of potential careers in agriculture, increase relationships between Ohio food producers and child nutrition program sponsors, and increase the amount of school-grown foods served in child nutrition meal programs.

Item	Estimated Cost	Narrative
EX: Two Hydroponic Grow Towers	$8,000	For STEM classes and lettuce for meal program.
Total Estimated Cost of Grow Ohio Grant Funds Requested		

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APPENDIX C – Application Questions

CONTACT INFORMATION

APPLICANT INFORMATION
- Name of Grow Ohio Grant Primary Contact Name and Title
- Contact Person's Telephone Number
- Contact Person's Email Address
- Name of School, Center, or Organization
- IRN of School, Center, or Organization
- Address of School, Center, or Organization
- Current Free and Reduced Meal Percentage (as of October 2023)

ELIGIBILITY

Confirm/check the following statements apply.
- I have the authority in my organization to apply for this grant. (Yes/No)
- The applicant is an Ohio school food authority (SFA), childcare center, or approved Summer Food Service Program (SFSP) sponsor and currently has an active IRN in the Claims Reimbursement and Reporting System (CRRS) account. (Yes/No)
- The organization is in good standing with the Ohio Department of Education and Workforce (all reports, reviews, and claims have been completed in a timely manner). (Yes/No)

How did you learn about the Grow Ohio Grant? Check all that apply.
- Items of Interest Email
- Email from my DEW Specialist
- DEW Website
- DEW Webinar
- At the 2024 Summer Summit
- Word of Mouth
- Other

PROJECT SUMMARY

GRANT REQUEST
- Project Name/Title
- Amount of Funding Requested (Should Match Amount on Budget Worksheet)
- Expected Project End Date
- ***Note***: *All grant work must be completed by **September 30, 2025**. All items and services must be paid for by the end of the grant contract. The final grant report will be due 60 days after the project end date.*

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PROJECT DESCRIPTION

Describe how the project will meet the following grant goals. Provide as much detail as possible. (Maximum of 4,000 characters, includes spaces)

- Create equitable opportunities for students to gain knowledge of career potential in agriculture.
- Increase relationships between Ohio food producers and child nutrition program sponsors.
- Increase amount of school grown foods served in USDA meal programs.

GRANT OUTCOMES

Describe what measurable outcomes you will track as part of your grant project. Include who will be responsible for tracking and reporting these outcomes. (Maximum of 2,000 characters, includes spaces)

Ex: "By purchasing equipment to build 10 raised beds at Smith Elementary School, we estimate an additional _____ pounds of produce from the garden will be donated to serve the 2,500 students participating daily in our school's breakfast and lunch programs."

PLAN OF WORK

Describe in detail the key facilitators of the grant project, who will be assigned to each task, as well as provide a timeline of when grant activities will be carried out. (Maximum of 2,000 characters, includes spaces)

STUDENT AND COMMUNITY ENGAGEMENT

STUDENT ENGAGEMENT

How will your school or organization promote and engage children/students in farm to school activities because of this grant? (Maximum of 2,000 characters, includes spaces)

COMMUNITY ENGAGEMENT

How will you engage families and community members as part of this grant? (Maximum of 2,000 characters, includes spaces)

EQUIPMENT REQUESTS (IF APPLICABLE)

Are you requesting funds for equipment? (Yes/No)

If Yes, is the equipment on the pre-approved equipment list? (Yes/No)

If No, Will the item(s) be used to create opportunities for students to gain knowledge of potential careers in agriculture, increase relationships between Ohio food producers and child nutrition program sponsors or increase the amount of school-grown foods served in USDA meal programs? (Yes/No)

Are you requesting Grow Ohio Grant funds to cover 100% of the cost of equipment? (Yes/No)

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If No, what percentage of outside funding (non-Grow Ohio Grant) will be contributed to equipment purchase? (Fill in the blank)

What type of purchasing will be used to procure equipment? (Micro-Purchase/Small Purchase)

ANTICIPATED BUDGET

Applicants will complete the provided Budget Template. Please send completed Budget Template to Rebecca.Naab@education.ohio.gov with the subject line "IRN, Grow Ohio Grant, Budget Template" prior to grant deadline.

SUSTAINABILITY

Describe how your project(s) will continue beyond the grant timeline. Include how your farm to school initiatives will be integrated into your organization's operations for years to come. (Maximum of 2,000 characters, includes spaces)

ADDITIONAL DOCUMENTS (IF APPLICABLE)

Please send any additional documentation that may support your application to Rebecca.Naab@education.ohio.gov with the subject line, "IRN, Grow Ohio Grant, Additional Documentation".