

# **AGRI Farm to School First Bite Mini Grant 2021 Request for Proposals**

## Table of Contents

<b>Grant Summary .....</b>	<b>3</b>
Application and Award Details .....	3
How to Submit Questions .....	3
<b>Grant Eligibility .....</b>	<b>4</b>
Eligible Applicants .....	4
Eligible Projects .....	4
Cash Match.....	4
<b>Reimbursable Food Purchases.....</b>	<b>4</b>
Supplanting Existing Purchases .....	4
Encouraged Procurement Items .....	5
Ineligible Procurement Items.....	5
Definitions .....	5
<b>Application Review .....</b>	<b>6</b>
Process and Timeline.....	6
Conflicts of Interest .....	6
Privacy Notice and Data Classification .....	7
<b>Requirements for Grant Recipients .....</b>	<b>8</b>
Grant Award Agreement, Reporting, and Payment.....	8
Site Visits and Follow-ups.....	8
Audits .....	8
Bidding Requirements .....	8
Affirmative Action and Non-Discrimination Requirements for All Grantees.....	8
Voter Registration Requirement .....	9
Background.....	9
<b>Project Evaluation Profile.....</b>	<b>9</b>
<b>Application Questions.....</b>	<b>10</b>
Applicant Information .....	10
Eligibility .....	10
Executive Summary .....	10
Impact on Minnesota Agriculture .....	11
Student and Community Engagement.....	11
Work Plan .....	11

## Grant Summary

---

### Application and Award Details

The Minnesota Department of Agriculture (MDA) anticipates awarding up to \$225,000 to reimburse school districts for purchasing Minnesota grown and raised foods used in school meal programs. School districts may apply for one of two grants:

- **AGRI Farm to School Full Tray Grant:** Grants are intended for school districts that have some Farm to School experience. The amount of funding each school district is eligible for is based on the number of reimbursable lunches and breakfasts served in October 2019, using the following formula: meals served x 10 cents x 10 months. The maximum award that a school district may apply for is \$35,000. School districts must also match grant funds on a 1:1 basis. We ask that you only request the amount of funding you think you can spend within the grant period (approximately February 2021 – August 2022).

*Example: (7,500 reimbursable lunches + 5,000 breakfasts) x \$0.10 x 10 months = \$12,500*

- **AGRI Farm to School First Bite Mini Grant:** Grants are intended for school districts that have little to no experience with local procurement as part of a Farm to School programing. The First Bite grant is intended to be an intentional learning process for the applicant. Recipients in FY2021 will not be eligible for the First Bite grant in subsequent funding rounds. The amount that a school district may apply for is a minimum of \$2,500 to a maximum of \$5,000 and there is no match required. We ask that you only request the amount of funding you think you can spend within the grant period (approximately February 2021 – August 2022).

We must receive your proposal no later than **4:00 p.m. Central Time on January 21, 2021**, for it be considered. Your application must be submitted through our online system. The application is accessed through a link on the AGRI Farm to First Bite Mini Grant Program webpage at [www.mda.state.mn.us/grants/f2smini](http://www.mda.state.mn.us/grants/f2smini). We will not consider late applications.

The MDA is not responsible for any technical or logistical problems resulting in the MDA not receiving the application on time. It is the responsibility of the applicant to ensure that submission is received by the MDA before the deadline.

### How to Submit Questions

Direct questions about the grant program and completing the application to:

Lisa Sawyer  
[Lisa.Sawyer@state.mn.us](mailto:Lisa.Sawyer@state.mn.us)  
Minnesota Department of Agriculture  
625 Robert Street North  
St. Paul, MN 55155

All questions should be submitted through writing by mail or email by **4:00 p.m. Central Time on January 15, 2021**. We post all questions and answers on the AGRI Farm to School First Bite Mini Grant webpage at <http://www.mda.state.mn.us/grants/f2smini>.

Other MDA employees are not authorized to provide advice on any applications. Applicants who solicit or receive advice from unauthorized MDA employees may be disqualified from eligibility for a grant award.

## Grant Eligibility

---

### Eligible Applicants

Public or private schools or school districts that participate in the National School Lunch Program (NSLP) and serve food to K-12 students are eligible to apply. School districts serving sovereign nations are encouraged to apply.

### Eligible Projects

Projects must focus on intentional, high-impact Farm to School efforts that highlight local food. These may include but are not limited to:

- Great Lakes Apple Crunch
- Local food taste test
- Farm to School Month October Meal with local food features
- Minnesota Thursdays
- Lunch with a farmer

We encourage projects that integrate connections between the cafeteria, classroom, and community. Schools cannot be reimbursed for purchases made prior to a contract being signed and purchases must be completed by August 31, 2022.

### Cash Match

The AGRI Farm to School First Bite Mini Grant does not require matching funds.

Donated and in-kind contributions cannot be counted towards the cash match requirement. Costs that were incurred prior the execution of the contract are also not eligible.

## Reimbursable Food Purchases

---

### Supplanting Existing Purchases

The AGRI Farm to School First Bite Mini Grant is intended to enable Minnesota schools to enter into or expand sourcing of Minnesota grown and raised foods. Applicants must document how the grant funds will enable new or increased Farm to School purchases.

100 percent of purchases made for reimbursement must be used to directly procure Minnesota grown or produced food for student consumption as a part of the Nutrition Services participation in the National School Lunch Program.

## Encouraged Procurement Items

Applicants are encouraged to consider a wide range of Minnesota food and agricultural products for procurement under this grant. Priority will be placed on reimbursements for those products that are unprocessed or minimally-processed and retain their inherent character (see [Definitions](#)). The MDA uses the definition for “unprocessed locally grown or locally raised agricultural products” as outlined by the federal government in support of the geographic preference procurement process.

Eligible procurement items include but are not limited to:

- Fruits
- Vegetables
- Meats, Fish, Poultry
- Dairy, excluding fluid milk
- Eggs
- Grains

## Ineligible Procurement Items

The following items are not eligible for reimbursement under this grant:

- Fluid milk
- Produce grown in school gardens
- Processed food products whose production technique is outside the scope of the food handling and preservation techniques outlined in the Definitions section
- Equipment, cooking supplies, and other non-food kitchen materials
- Staff-time for procurement, other food preparation, and related Farm to School planning
- Marketing and promotional items associated with Farm to School meals and events

## Definitions

### Minnesota Grown or Raised

Food is defined as Minnesota grown or raised if at least 80 percent of the product was produced and processed in Minnesota.

### Local

For this grant, local means grown or raised in the State of Minnesota.

### Unprocessed or Minimally-processed

The following processing methods are allowable for foods to still be considered unprocessed or minimally-processed: cooling; refrigerating; freezing; size adjustment made by peeling, slicing, dicing, cutting,

chopping, shucking, and grinding; forming ground products into patties without any additives or fillers; drying/dehydration; washing; packaging (such as placing eggs in cartons), vacuum packing and bagging (such as placing vegetables in bags or combining two or more types of vegetables or fruits in a single package); the addition of ascorbic acid or other preservatives to prevent oxidation of produce; butchering livestock and poultry; and cleaning fish.

**Source Preservation**

Source preservation means that the origin of the food item is identifiable through delivery. To receive reimbursement when purchasing through an intermediary vendor like a distributor or food hub, identification of origin farm (farm name, principal operator, product, county) must be included on submitted invoices.

**Emerging Farmer**

The term Emerging Farmer encompasses several historically underserved communities including women, veterans, persons with disabilities, Native American/Alaskan Native, communities of color, young and beginning farmers, and LGBTQ+ farmers. For more on Emerging Farmers, see the [Emerging Farmers Report](#) from the Minnesota Department of Agriculture.

**Application Review**

---

**Process and Timeline**

A committee of Farm to School practitioners and MDA staff will review all eligible applications using the project evaluation profile. Reviewers may recommend the partial funding of a project. The Commissioner of Agriculture will review the committee’s recommendations and is responsible for award decisions. The review committee and Commissioner may also use rural/urban and geographic diversity when making their recommendations and decisions. We will notify all applicants, both successful and unsuccessful, in writing regarding the outcome of their application.

Questions due no later than 4:00 pm Central Time.....January 15, 2021

2021 applications due no later than 4:00 pm Central Time.....January 21, 2021

Applicants notified of decisions.....February 2021

**Conflicts of Interest**

The State will take steps to prevent individual and organizational conflicts of interest, both in reference to applicants and reviewers, per [Minnesota Statute 16B.98](#) and the [Conflict of Interest Policy for State Grant-Making \(PDF\)](#).

Organizational conflicts of interest occur when:

- A grantee or applicant is unable or potentially unable to render impartial assistance or advice to the MDA due to competing duties or loyalties.

- A grantee's or applicant's objectivity in carrying out the grant is or might be otherwise impaired due to competing duties or loyalties.

In cases where a conflict of interest is suspected, disclosed, or discovered, the applicants or grantees will be notified and actions may be pursued, including but not limited to disqualification from eligibility for the grant award or termination of the grant agreement.

## Privacy Notice and Data Classification

The information provided by an applicant will be used to assess the applicant's eligibility to receive a grant under the AGRI Program. The decision to apply for this grant is voluntary, and applicants are not legally required to provide any of the requested information. Applicants may decline to complete this application without any legal consequence. However, only completed applications will be considered for a grant; incomplete applications will not be considered.

Data provided in this application is initially classified by the Minnesota Data Practices Act as private or nonpublic, although some or all of the data will generally become public at various points of the application process unless the data are otherwise classified by state or federal law. Access to private or nonpublic data is limited by law to MDA staff and contractors with a valid work assignment to access the data, parties authorized by the applicant or by a valid court order, Minnesota Management and Budget, Minnesota Department of Administration, the state auditor, and the legislative auditor. If necessary, the MDA may also share the data with law enforcement.

Per [Minnesota Statute 13.599](#):

- Names and addresses of grant applicants, and the grant amount requested, will be public data once application responses are opened.
- All remaining data in application responses (except trade secret information, see below) becomes public data after the evaluation process is completed (for the purposes of this grant, when all grant agreements have been fully executed).
- All data created or maintained by the MDA as part of the evaluation process (except trade secret information, see below) will be public data after the evaluation process is completed.
- Trade secret information (as defined in [Minnesota Statute 13.37](#)) is classified as private or nonpublic. In order for an applicant to protect data submitted as part of this application as trade secret information, the applicant must identify the specific formula, pattern, compilation, program, device, method, technique or process that the applicant wishes to protect, and provide an explanation of the economic value of keeping the data from being generally known to other persons. Determining what constitutes trade secret information is ultimately the responsibility of the MDA, and the MDA cannot guarantee that data marked by an applicant as trade secret information or marked "confidential" will be classified as such. If the MDA determines that data do not meet the definition of trade secret information, that data will be available to the public unless the applicant secures a court order saying otherwise.

## Requirements for Grant Recipients

---

### Grant Award Agreement, Reporting, and Payment

Upon approval of an application and prior to beginning work on the grant project(s) and receiving reimbursements, the applicant is required to do the following:

- Complete an IRS W-9 form or register as a vendor in SWIFT, the State's accounting system, and submit other required documentation within 30 days of award notification; and
- Sign a Grant Award Agreement indicating their intention to complete the proposed tasks. The agreement also authorizes the MDA to monitor the progress of the project. The grant award document must be signed within 30 days of being sent to the grantee.

Grant funds are dispersed on a reimbursement basis. All grantee requests for reimbursement must correspond to the approved grant budget. To receive grant payments, grantees must provide proof that Minnesota grown and raised foods have been purchased through submitting receipts and invoices and proof that the vendors have been paid. A progress report narrative the grantee will report the following:

- Sources of local products, including Farmer Name, Farm, and County
- Varieties, quantities, and cost of local products (Reimbursable and Match)

### Site Visits and Follow-ups

The grant agreement allows the MDA to monitor the progress of the project. Grantees may receive monitoring visits at the discretion of the MDA. We also conduct follow-up surveys to help us determine the long-term impacts of the grants we award. Grantees may receive surveys for up to two years after contract has ended.

### Audits

Per [Minnesota Statute 16B.98 Subdivision 8](#), the grantee's books, records, documents, and accounting procedures and practices of the grantee or other party that are relevant to the grant or transaction are subject to examination by the granting agency and either the legislative auditor or the state auditor, as appropriate. This requirement will last for a minimum of six years from the grant agreement end date, receipt, and approval of all final reports, or the required period of time to satisfy all state and program retention requirements, whichever is later.

### Bidding Requirements

All funded applicants will be required to abide by the State's bidding requirements for large purchases. See a detailed list of the state's [bidding requirements](#) for details.

### Affirmative Action and Non-Discrimination Requirements for All Grantees

The grantee agrees not to discriminate against any employee or applicant for employment because of race, color, creed, religion, national origin, sex, marital status, status in regard to public assistance, membership or activity in a local commission, disability, sexual orientation, or age in regard to any position for which the employee or applicant for employment is qualified. [Minnesota Statute 363A.02](#). The grantee agrees to take affirmative steps to employ, advance in employment, upgrade, train, and recruit minority persons, women, and persons with disabilities.



The grantee must not discriminate against any employee or applicant for employment because of physical or mental disability in regard to any position for which the employee or applicant for employment is qualified. The grantee agrees to take affirmative action to employ, advance in employment, and otherwise treat qualified disabled persons without discrimination based upon their physical or mental disability in all employment practices such as the following: employment, upgrading, demotion or transfer, recruitment, advertising, layoff or termination, rates of pay or other forms of compensation, and selection for training, including apprenticeship. [Minnesota Rules, part 5000.3500](#).

The grantee agrees to comply with the rules and relevant orders of the Minnesota Department of Human Rights issued pursuant to the [Minnesota Human Rights Act](#).

## Voter Registration Requirement

The grantee will comply with [Minnesota Statute 201.162](#) by providing voter registration services for its employees and for the public served by the grantee.

## Background

The MDA Agricultural Growth, Research, and Innovation Program (AGRI) was established to advance Minnesota's agricultural and renewable energy industries ([Minnesota Statute 41A.12](#)). AGRI has made significant economic impacts by increasing productivity, improving efficiency, and assisting the development of agricultural products. The AGRI Farm to School First Bite Mini Grant Program is intended to increase the use amount of Minnesota grown and raised foods used in school nutrition programs.

## Project Evaluation Profile

Evaluation Criteria	Maximum Score
Increases access to and consumption of local, Minnesota grown food	25
Provides an important step forward for the institution's Farm to School program development and experience	25
Increases purchases from Emerging Farmers, such as Native American producers, immigrant farmers, or farmers of color	10
Demonstrates that the applicant has researched and adequately planned for sourcing, purchase, and uses of local food in project activities	10
Creates strong connections between community, cafeteria, and classroom	10
Work plan is thorough and realistic, and all required deliverables will be completed by August 31, 2022	10
Proposal is clear, concise, and complete	10
<b>Total</b>	<b>100</b>

## Application Questions

---

### Applicant Information

- Applicant Name
- Name of School District
- Mailing Address
- City
- State
- Zip
- Email Address
- Counties Served
- State House District(s) your institution serves  
*This information can be found at [www.leg.state.mn.us/leg/districtfinder](http://www.leg.state.mn.us/leg/districtfinder).*

### Eligibility

Please answer each of the following questions.

- Applicant is a Minnesota school or school district serving K-12 students and participates in the NSLP. (Yes/No)
- Your organization is in Minnesota or authorized to conduct business in Minnesota. (Yes/No)
- I have authority to apply for this grant. (Yes/No)

How did you hear about the AGRI Farm to School First Bite Mini Grant? Please check all that apply:

- MDA Website
- Word of Mouth
- Notification from another organization (please list)
- Tradeshow (please list)
- Other

### Executive Summary

Include a description of the project and goals to be accomplished. The executive summary of this proposed project must be suitable for dissemination to the public. *(Maximum 1,200 characters, including spaces)*

Amount of Grant Request (minimum: \$2,500; maximum \$5,000):

## Impact on Minnesota Agriculture

How have you engaged in Farm to School to date? If you have no Farm to School experience, please describe what interests you in starting a Farm to School Program. *(Maximum 2,000 characters, including spaces)*

What local foods do you plan to purchase? How will you source these foods and use them in your food program? If applicable, please describe how you will source from Emerging Farmers. *(Maximum 2,000 characters, including spaces)*

Describe your ability to manage and track reporting requirements on the grant. *(Maximum 2,000 characters, including spaces)*

## Student and Community Engagement

How will you market and promote the local food you purchase? How will you create connections between cafeteria, classroom, and community? *(Maximum 2,000 characters, including spaces)*

How will students benefit from your First Bite Mini Grant activities? *(Maximum 2,000 characters, including spaces)*

## Work Plan

Complete the following table. You should include the steps that you will take to successfully complete your project. For example, you might include target dates for requesting quotes, installing and testing equipment, and full launch of the equipment. Not all areas will apply to all projects. You may add additional lines or pages as necessary.

*Example:*

Timeframe	Description of Task/Action Item	Responsible Party
March 2021	Reach out to and connect with local orchard farmers	Nutrition Director
October 2021	Promote and prepare for Apple Crunch	Director and Teachers

Timeframe	Description of Task/Action Item	Responsible Party