

Farm to School First Bite & AGRI Equipment Grant Fiscal Year 2023 Request for Proposals

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Grant Summary

Overview and funding availability

Farm to School Grants are administered by the Minnesota Department of Agriculture (MDA). These grants support Minnesota school districts that want to purchase and serve Minnesota agricultural products as a part of their National School Lunch Program (NSLP) or School Breakfast Program (SBP).

The MDA anticipates awarding nearly \$3.5 million of United States Department of Agriculture (USDA) Local Foods for Schools (LFS) funds to reimburse school districts for purchasing Minnesota grown and raised foods used in school meal programs and up to \$748,000 of Agricultural Growth, Research, and Innovation (AGRI) state funds to reimburse schools for purchasing kitchen equipment that enhances their Farm to School programs.

School districts may apply for USDA funding for local food as well as AGRI funding for equipment through one of these Fiscal Year (FY) 2023 programs:

- Farm to School First Bite and AGRI Equipment Grant
- Farm to School Full Tray and AGRI Equipment Grant
 - Includes option to request Second Helping Food Funds

Farm to School First Bite Mini Grant

The Farm to School First Bite Mini Grant offers funding for school districts that have little to no experience with local procurement as part of a Farm to School program. This grant is intended to be an intentional learning process for the applicant.

A school district may apply for a minimum of \$2,500 and a maximum of \$10,000. There is no match required.

Note: School districts that received a First Bite Mini Grant or Full Tray Grant in FY 2021 or 2022 are not eligible to apply for a First Bite Mini Grant in FY 2023 but can apply for a Full Tray Grant. Recipients in FY 2023 will not be eligible for the First Bite grant in subsequent funding rounds.

Farm to School Full Tray Grant

The Farm to School Full Tray Grant offers funding 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 2021**, using the following formula:

Meals served x \$0.20 x 10 months = eligible amount of funding for the Full Tray Grant

Example: (7,500 reimbursable lunches + 5,000 breakfasts) x \$0.20 x 10 months = \$25,000

A school district may apply for a minimum of \$2,500 and a maximum of \$100,000. There is no match required. School districts should apply for less than the amount they are eligible for if they do not think they can spend the full amount before January 19, 2024.

Request for Second Helping Food Funds

Full Tray applicants can indicate on their application if they would like to be considered for *additional* food funding (beyond their requested Full Tray formula-based amount) if the MDA has remaining funds available after initial grant awards are made. Second Helping food fund requests are capped at a maximum of an additional \$50,000 per school district for Full Tray applicants.

Note: First Bite applicants are not eligible for Second Helping food funds. If a First Bite applicant would like to apply for Second Helping food funds, they may apply for a Full Tray grant.

Second Helping food fund requests should be incorporated into the applicant’s budget table and will be awarded based on the information included in the Full Tray application and the information included on plans for using Second Helping food funds. Applicants can expect to be notified of additional funding in their award notification letter. Second Helping food fund amounts will be written into the Full Tray Grant Contract Agreement. Receiving a Full Tray Grant does not guarantee the award of Second Helping food funds.

AGRI Equipment Grant

Farm to School First Bite and Full Tray Grant applicants may also apply for up to \$35,000 for equipment purchases, in addition to funds for food. Equipment requests may include the cost of equipment, shipping, and associated installation costs and must support Farm to School initiatives. A 1:1 match is required for AGRI equipment grants.

Timeline and deadlines

November 9, 2022.....Questions due no later than 4:00 pm Central Time

November 17, 2022.....Applications due no later than 4:00 pm Central Time

January 12, 2023 (estimated).....Applicants notified of decisions; grant agreement negotiations begin

This Request for Proposals contains details on how to apply for the **Farm to School First Bite and AGRI Equipment Grant**.

Eligible applicants

Public or private schools or school districts in Minnesota that participate in the NSLP and serve food to K-12 students are eligible to apply. School districts serving sovereign tribal nations are encouraged to apply. School districts that have prior Farm to School experience, or that have previously received a Farm to School First Bite Mini Grant should apply for the [Farm to School Full Tray Grant](#).

Eligibility and Requirements: First Bite Grant

Eligible projects

The Farm to School First Bite Mini Grant is intended to enable Minnesota school districts to begin or expand sourcing of Minnesota grown and raised foods. Applicants must document how the grant funds will enable new or sustained Farm to School purchases.

Projects must focus on intentional, high-impact Farm to School efforts that highlight local foods served in NSLP and SBP. This may include but is not limited to:

- Trialing new Minnesota grown products on the menu or through taste tests
- Participating in the Great Lakes Apple Crunch
- Hosting a Breakfast or Lunch with a Farmer meal
- Increasing the number of times a Minnesota item or meal repeats on the menu
- Adding Minnesota Thursday as monthly feature to the menu
- Expanding the number of featured items or meals during Farm to School Month
- Introducing local sourcing into the SBP

In addition, projects must:

- Not start until the grant contract is signed by all parties and has reached its start date
- Be completed by **January 19, 2024**. Contracts for local food purchases may not be extended beyond this date. However, contracts for equipment purchases will end on or before **August 31, 2025**.
- Be conducted in Minnesota at schools that participate in the NSLP
- Purchase Minnesota grown and raised foods

Applicants are encouraged to integrate connections between the cafeteria, classroom, and community by increasing the number of local farms the school sources from directly or through a distributor or food hub.

Eligible food expenses

100% of purchases made for reimbursement must be used directly to procure Minnesota grown or produced food for student consumption as a part of the school district's participation in the NSLP and SBP. Local foods purchased through food hubs, distributors, farmers' markets, etc. must be grown or produced in Minnesota.

Applicants are encouraged to consider a wide range of Minnesota food and agricultural products for procurement under this grant. Products must be unprocessed or minimally-processed and retain their inherent character to be eligible for reimbursement. The MDA will use 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 may include but are not limited to:

- Fruits
- Vegetables
- Meat, fish, and poultry
- Dairy (excluding fluid milk)
- Eggs
- Grains

Ineligible food expenses

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

- Fluid milk
- Processed products, such as hot dogs, premade smoothies, and granola
- Produce grown in school gardens
- Items grown or produced in a state other than Minnesota, including foods grown in a bordering state but sourced through a Minnesota farmers' market, food hub, or distributor
- Items purchased for any meal or snack program outside of the NSLP or SBP
- Processed food products whose production technique is outside the scope of the food handling and preservation techniques outlined below
- 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

Match requirement

A cash match is not required for FY 2023 food purchases, thanks to the LFS Cooperative Agreement with the USDA.

Applicants are required to document 100% of eligible purchases to receive a 100% reimbursement following quarterly submission of invoices and reports.

Eligibility and Requirements: AGRI Equipment Grant

Eligible expenses

The MDA will award equipment funds to requests that directly support the applicant's Farm to School efforts. Receiving a First Bite or Full Tray Grant does not guarantee the award of the equipment request. Equipment requests may include the cost of equipment, shipping, and associated installation costs. AGRI Equipment grants must be completed on or before **August 31, 2025**.

Eligible equipment items may include but are not limited to:

- Food processors
- Soup kettles
- Vacuum sealers
- Steamer trays
- Countertop griddles
- Combi ovens
- Freezers, coolers, refrigerators
- Braising pans

Match requirement

A 1:1 match is required for approved equipment purchases. Matching funds can be additional local food purchases or 50% of equipment expenses. 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. First Bite and Full Tray Grant funds cannot be used towards the equipment match requirement.

Questions about the match should be directed to MDA.AGRIGrants@state.mn.us with “Farm to School First Bite Grant” in the subject line.

The following example demonstrates two different scenarios for fulfilling the equipment match requirement:

Applicant received a First Bite Grant for **\$5,000**. In addition to that grant, the applicant would like to purchase a Robot Coupe for **\$4,000**. The applicant can either:

1. Pay for 50% of the total cost of the equipment to fulfill the 1:1 match requirement. The applicant would request funds as follows:
 - First Bite Grant Funds Requested: \$5,000
 - Equipment Grant Funds Requested: \$2,000
 - Total Grant Funds Requested: \$7,000
 - Applicant’s Cash Match: \$2,000
 - Total Project Costs: \$9,000 (First Bite Grant + Full Cost of Equipment)

Source of match: 50% of cost of equipment

OR

2. Pay for 100% of the total cost of the equipment and purchase an additional \$4,000 of local foods to fulfill the 1:1 match requirement. The applicant would request funds as follows:
 - First Bite Grant Funds Requested: \$5,000
 - Equipment Grant Funds Requested: \$4,000
 - Total Grant Funds Requested: \$9,000
 - Applicant’s Cash Match: \$4,000
 - Total Project Costs: \$13,000 (Total Grant Funds Requested + 1:1 Match)

Source of match: Additional local food purchases

Ineligible Grant Expenses

The following are examples of expenses that are ineligible for both First Bite and AGRI Equipment Grants:

- Expenditures incurred prior to contract execution
- Staff wages and benefits
- Advertising, public relations, entertainment, and amusement costs
- Donated or volunteer (in-kind) services. While these may be furnished to an applicant by professional and technical personnel, consultants, and other skilled and unskilled labor, the value of these services is not an eligible cost.
- Donations and in-kind contributions, including property and services, made by the applicant (regardless of the recipient)
- Fines, penalties, and other settlement expenses resulting from failure of the applicant to comply with federal, state, local, or Native American Tribal laws and regulations
- Indirect costs (expenses of doing business that are not readily identified with the project)
- Fundraising, including financial campaigns, solicitation of gifts and bequests, and similar expenses incurred to raise capital or obtain contributions
- Taxes, except sales tax on goods and services
- Lobbyists, political contributions
- Bad debts, late payment fees, finance charges, legal costs, or contingency funds
- Parking or traffic violations
- Out of state transportation and travel expenses. Minnesota will be considered the home state for determining whether travel is out of state.

How to Apply

How to submit questions

For questions on the grant program or application:

- Submit your question in writing before **4:00 p.m. Central Time on November 9, 2022.**
- Email MDA.AGRIGrants@state.mn.us with “Farm to School First Bite Grant” in the subject line.

We will post responses to all program questions on the [Questions and Answers](#) section of the Farm to School First Bite Grant webpage.

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.

For help with the online application system:

- Call 651-201-6500 or email MDA.AGRIGrants@state.mn.us for technical assistance.
 - Include “Farm to School First Bite Grant” in the subject line.

How to submit an application

- Apply for the Farm to School First Bite and AGRI Equipment Grant using our [online application system](#).
 - We must receive your application by **4:00 p.m. Central Time on Thursday, November 17, 2022**, to be considered for funding. We will not accept late applications.
- Be sure to apply early so there is enough time to get technical assistance if needed.
 - It is best practice to submit your application at least 24 hours in advance.

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 the submission is received by the MDA before the deadline.

Priorities

It is the policy of the State of Minnesota to ensure fairness, precision, equity, and consistency in competitive grant awards. This includes implementing diversity and inclusion in grant-making.

[Policy 08-02: Rating Criteria for Competitive Grant Review \(PDF\)](#) establishes the expectation that grant programs intentionally identify how the grant serves diverse populations, especially populations experiencing inequities and/or disparities.

The Farm to School First Bite Grant will serve public or private schools or school districts that participate in the NSLP or SBP and serve food to K-12 students.

This grant will prioritize applicants that purchase Minnesota grown and raised foods from socially disadvantaged and Emerging Farmers. This includes farmers of color; American Indian or Alaskan Native farmers; women; veterans; farmers with disabilities; young farmers; beginning farmers; LGBTQ+ farmers; and urban farmers.

Collaboration

Each school district requesting funds must submit a separate proposal. School districts are encouraged to collaborate with farmers, nonprofits, and local public health to strengthen their Farm to School program and application, but the school district must be the applicant for this grant.

Application guidelines

- Use plain, easily understood language. Write for reviewers who are generally knowledgeable about Farm to School but may not have a thorough or deep understanding of your school.
- Answer all questions completely within the character limits specified in the grant application.
- Review the [Project Evaluation Profile](#) included in this document as it is used to score and compare the grant applications.

Application Review Policies

Review process

A review committee, composed of MDA staff and external reviewers, will evaluate all eligible applications based on the criteria in the Project Evaluation Profile. Reviewers may recommend whole or 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 use rural/urban, geographic distribution, services to special populations, applicant's history as a state grantee, and capacity to perform the work when making their decisions. The MDA will notify applicants, both successful and unsuccessful, in writing. Applicants may request a summary of reviewer comments.

Conflicts of interest

State grant policy requires that steps and procedures are in place to prevent individual and organizational conflicts of interest, both in reference to applicants and reviewers ([MINN. STAT.16B.98](#) and [Conflict of Interest Policy for State Grant-Making, 2022 \(Word\)](#)).

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 USDA and AGRI Programs. 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, parties identified in a valid court order or federal subpoena, 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 or the Office of the Attorney General.

Per Minnesota's statute on grants ([MINN. STAT. 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.

Procedure for claiming protection of trade secrets: Trade secret information is classified as not public data. In order to qualify as trade secret information, the data in question must be provided to the MDA by the affected person (i.e. the data must be about the applicant) and otherwise meet the legal definition found in statute ([MINN. STAT. 13.37, subd. 1\(b\)](#)). In order for an applicant to assert trade secret protection for data submitted as part of this application, the applicant must: 1) clearly identify the specific formula, pattern, compilation, program, device, method, technique, or process that the applicant believes to be trade secret information; 2) describe what efforts the applicant takes to maintain the secrecy of the data; and 3) adequately explain how the data derive(s) independent economic value from not being generally known to, and not readily ascertainable by proper means by, other persons. Merely asserting trade secret protection does not, in and of itself, classify the data in question as not public; determining what data meet the definition of trade secret information is ultimately the legal responsibility of the MDA, and the MDA cannot guarantee that data identified as trade secret information by an applicant will be classified as such. If the MDA determines that data do not meet the definition of trade secret information, the data in question will be available to the public unless the applicant secures a court order saying otherwise.

All persons, businesses, and individuals applying for grants in the state of Minnesota must comply with applicable laws. Under the law titled Right of Setoff ([MINN STAT 270C.65, subd. 3](#)), a grantee consents to disclosure of its social security number, federal employer tax identification number, and/or Minnesota tax identification number, already provided to the State, to federal and state tax agencies, and to state personnel involved in the payment of state obligations. These identification numbers may be used in the enforcement of federal and state tax laws which could result in action requiring a grantee to file state tax returns and pay delinquent state tax liabilities, if any.

Requirements for Grant Recipients

Pre-award financial review

All non-governmental organizations (NGOs) applying for grants from the State of Minnesota must undergo a financial review prior to a grant award made of \$25,000 and higher.

To comply with [Policy 08-06: Financial Review of Nongovernmental Organizations \(PDF\)](#), you may be asked to submit one of the following documents:

- Grant applicants with annual income of under \$50,000, or who have not been in existence long enough to have a completed IRS Form 990 or audit, should submit their most recent board-reviewed financial statements.
- Grant applicants with total annual revenue of \$50,000 or more but less than \$750,000 should submit their most recent IRS Form 990.
- Grant applicants with total annual revenue of over \$750,000 should submit their most recent certified financial audit.

All individual and for-profit businesses selected for a grant award over \$100,000 must submit either a [Form REV 185i \(PDF\)](#) or [Form REV185b \(PDF\)](#) at the time of grant award notification. These forms give the Minnesota Department of Revenue permission to inform the MDA if the grantee owes any back taxes.

Grant contract agreement

Grant contract agreement templates are available for review on the [Office of Grants Management Forms and FAQs](#) webpage.

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.
- If a for-profit business or individual receiving a grant award over \$100,000, complete a Minnesota Department of Revenue Form REV185b (for businesses) or a Form REV185i (for individuals).
- If a non-profit organization receiving an award over \$25,000, submit a copy of the organization’s most recent audited financial statement.
- Sign a grant contract agreement indicating their intention to complete the proposed tasks. The agreement also authorizes the MDA to monitor the progress of the project. The grant contract document must be signed within 30 days of being sent to the grantee.

Eligible expenses may only be incurred after the contract has been signed by all parties (contract effective date).

- Applicants should anticipate having one contract for First Bite food funds that will end on or before **January 19, 2024**. First Bite grant contract agreements may not be extended beyond this date.
- Applicants should anticipate having a separate contract for AGRI Equipment funds that will end on or before **August 31, 2025**.

Accountability and reporting

Quarterly requests for reimbursement are required to be submitted throughout the duration of the project. For each quarterly reimbursement, the grantee will be required to submit information including:

- Sources of local products, including farmer name, farm, and county
- Varieties, quantities, and cost of local products
- The names of all local food producers that qualify as “socially disadvantaged” or “emerging”
- The names of all local food producers that qualify as a “small business”
- Proof of purchase and proof of payment for each item (invoices, receipts, canceled checks, etc.)

Quarterly reports must be submitted according to the following schedule:

Due Date	Date Range	Type of Progress Report
March 31, 2023	Contract Effective Date to March 31, 2023	Quarterly invoicing
June 30, 2023	April 1, 2023 – June 30, 2023	Quarterly invoicing
September 29, 2023	July 1, 2023 – September 29, 2023	Quarterly invoicing
December 29, 2023	September 30, 2023 – December 29, 2023	Quarterly invoicing
March 4, 2024	December 30, 2023 – January 19, 2024 (Contract End Date)	Final performance report and final invoicing

To receive final payment, grantees are required to submit a final report along with their final reimbursement request. These dates and required reporting metrics are subject to change.

In addition, follow-up surveys are required to help us determine the long-term impacts of the grant. Grantees are required to respond to requests for follow-up information for three years beyond the term of the grant agreement. Failure to respond to these in a timely manner may impact your ability to secure future funding from the MDA.

Payments

All grant funds are dispersed on a reimbursement basis. Grantee requests for reimbursement must correspond to the approved grant budget(s).

To receive reimbursement for local food purchases, school districts must provide proof that Minnesota grown and raised foods have been purchased by submitting receipts and invoices and proofs of payment to demonstrate that the vendor has been paid.

To receive reimbursement for equipment purchases, school districts must submit receipts and invoices and proofs of payment to demonstrate that the equipment has been paid for in full and the match has been fully accounted for.

Grantees must submit quarterly expenses for reimbursement on the schedule outlined in the table above along with their quarterly progress report. Grant payments shall not be made on grants with past due progress reports unless the MDA has given the grantee a written extension.

Site visits and financial reconciliations

The grant agreement allows the MDA to monitor the progress of the project. The MDA will perform a monitoring visit for all grantees with awards of \$25,000 or more before a final payment is approved. Other grantees may receive monitoring visits at the discretion of the MDA.

Bidding requirements

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

Affirmative action and non-discrimination policy

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 ([MINN. STAT. 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 regarding 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](#).

Audits of project

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 ([MINN. STAT. 16B.98, subd. 8](#)). 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.

Voter registration requirement

The grantee will provide voter registration services for its employees ([MINN. STAT. 201.162](#)).

AGRI Background and Program Goals

The Agricultural Growth, Research, and Innovation Program (AGRI) was established to advance Minnesota's agricultural and renewable energy industries ([MINN. STAT. 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 Equipment Grant Program is intended to help schools purchase necessary kitchen equipment to support Farm to School efforts as a part of their school nutrition programs.

USDA Background and Program Goals

FY 2023 grants are supported by nearly \$3.5 million in funding from the USDA Local Foods for Schools (LFS) Cooperative Agreement Program with support from the Cargill Foundation. LFS funding is intended to help states deal with the challenges of supply chain disruptions brought on by the pandemic; strengthen the food system for schools by helping to build a fair, competitive, and resilient local food chain; and expand local and regional markets with an emphasis on purchasing from historically underserved producers and processors. The Farm to School First Bite Grant Program is intended to increase the amount of Minnesota grown and raised foods used in school nutrition programs.

Definitions

Minnesota grown or raised

Food is defined as Minnesota grown or raised if at least 80% 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 and 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 (transparency)

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, food hub, or farmers' market, 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 \(PDF\)](#) and [Connecting with Emerging Farmers](#) webpage from the Minnesota Department of Agriculture.

Socially Disadvantaged Producer

A Socially Disadvantaged Farmer or Rancher is a farmer or rancher who is a member of a Socially Disadvantaged Group. A Socially Disadvantaged Group is a group whose members have been subject to discrimination on the basis of race, color, national origin, age, disability, and, where applicable, sex, marital status, familial status, parental status, religion, sexual orientation, genetic information, political beliefs, reprisal, or because all or a part of an individual's income is derived from any public assistance program.

Small business

A small business is generally defined by the U.S. Small Business Administration as a business that is a for-profit-businesses of any legal structure; independently owned and operated, not nationally dominant in its field, and physically located and operated in the U.S. or its territories.

Farm to School Food Safety FAQ

Question 1: Can schools buy food directly from local farmers?

Answer: Yes! The goal of the Farm to School grant program is to help schools serve more Minnesota grown and raised foods and build relationships in their local community. See the fact sheets below for more information about legal local food purchasing.

- [Approved Sources for Food Products](#)
- [Local Food Fact Sheet: Produce](#)
- [Local Food Fact Sheet: Meat and Poultry](#)
- [Local Food Fact Sheet: Shell Eggs](#)

Question 2: Can schools buy from a local food hub or aggregator?

Answer: Yes. An aggregator is an entity that combines and distributes products from multiple farmers. Aggregators need to have a food handler license from the Minnesota Department of Agriculture. You can request for the license number to be listed on your invoice.

Question 3: My school uses a food service management company for our school meals program. Can we still apply for grant funding?

Answer: Yes! Any school that operates the NSLP is eligible to apply. However, before you apply, please coordinate with your school nutrition department staff and other food service management company staff to ensure they are aware of and can follow through with the grant deliverables.

Question 4: What are the legal requirements for purchasing local food?

Answer: The [Food Safety Requirements for Farmers \(PDF\)](#) factsheet from the Minnesota Department of Education provides a brief overview of what you need to know about legal requirements for buying local food and how farmers meet food safety requirements.

Question 5: What are good food safety questions to ask farmers?

Answer: Having a conversation with a farmer is a great way to learn about their food safety practices and ensure the produce you receive is grown, harvested, and packaged using best food safety practices. The resources below have a list of questions you can ask farmers and helpful things to listen for when having a conversation:

- [Food Safety Questions to Ask your Farmer \(PDF\)](#)
- [Talk with your produce farmer about food safety](#)
- [Webinar: Food Safety for Buying Local Food](#)

Question 6: I am ready to learn about buying local. Where can I find more information, resources, and support?

Answer: There are several agencies and organizations that collaborate to support Farm to School in Minnesota.

- [University of Minnesota Extension Farm to School](#)
- [Minnesota Department of Education Farm to School](#)
- [Minnesota Institute for Sustainable Agriculture Local Food Fact Sheet Series](#)

Farm to School technical assistance office hours

The Minnesota Farm to School Leadership Team hosts [technical assistance office hours](#) on the second Wednesday of each month, 2:30-3:30 p.m. on Zoom. Join these virtual calls to discuss and find answers to your questions related to Farm to School and local food purchasing.

Project Evaluation Profile

Farm to School First Bite Grant evaluation criteria	Maximum score
Impact on Minnesota agriculture <ul style="list-style-type: none"> The proposed Farm to School First Bite Grant project will increase access to and consumption of Minnesota grown and raised foods. 	25
Farm to School plans <ul style="list-style-type: none"> The proposed Farm to School First Bite Grant project will provide an important step forward for the institution’s Farm to School program development and experience. 	25
Impact on Socially Disadvantaged and Emerging Farmers <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Provides a clear plan to work with socially disadvantaged or emerging farmers, including established relationships or plans for how to meet and identify socially disadvantaged or emerging farmers in their community Increases purchases from socially disadvantaged or emerging farmers, such as women, veterans, persons with disabilities, Native American/Alaskan Native, communities of color, young and beginning farmers, and LGBTQ+ farmers 	10
Student and community engagement <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Creates strong connections between community, cafeteria, and classroom 	10
Measurable outcomes <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Demonstrates that the applicant has researched and adequately planned for sourcing, purchasing, and the use of local food in project activities Describes applicant’s ability to manage and track reporting requirements on the grant for reimbursable expenses 	10
Work plan and timeline <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Work plan is thorough and realistic A detailed description of each step of the grant project is provided with estimated dates All purchases are completed by January 19, 2024 	10
Clear, concise, complete <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Proposal is easy to understand, brief, and meets all requirements 	10
Farm to School First Bite Grant Total	100

AGRI Equipment Grant evaluation criteria	Maximum score
AGRI Equipment Request <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Applicant adequately demonstrates that the equipment will support their Farm to School program <i>(scale of 1-10 points)</i> • Budget table is clear and explains the use of grant funds and amount and source of the cash match <i>(scale of 1-10 points)</i> 	20
AGRI Equipment Grant Total	20

Application Questions: Farm to School First Bite Grant

Contact information

Applicant information

- Name of Contact Person
- Name of School District
- School District Mailing Address
- Contact Person's Telephone
- Contact Person's Email
- Counties Served
- State House District(s) your institution serves (found at www.leg.state.mn.us/leg/districtfinder)

Authorized representative

If awarded a grant, the person that will sign the Farm to School Grant Contract Agreements for this organization.

- Name
- Title
- Telephone
- Email

Eligibility

Confirm that the following statements apply to your organization:

- I have the authority to apply for this grant (Yes/No)
- Applicant is a Minnesota school or school district serving K-12 students and participating in NSLP or SBP (Yes/No)
- Applicant organization is in good standing with the State of Minnesota. (No back taxes owed, no defaults on Minnesota state-backed financing for the past seven years, in compliance with current state regulations, and acceptable performance on past MDA grants.) (Yes/No)

The MDA is unable to reimburse for any work that is performed prior to the start date of the contract. Has work started on your proposed project or will work start before the grant contract agreement is signed by all parties? (Yes/No)

How did you hear about the Farm to School First Bite & Equipment Grant? Check all that apply:

- MDA website
- Word of mouth
- Notification from another organization (please list)
- Tradeshow (please list)
- Other

Project summary

Grant request

- Project name
- First Bite Grant funds requested (minimum \$2,500, maximum \$10,000)
- AGRI Equipment Grant funds requested (maximum \$35,000)
- Total grant funds requested (Food + Equipment)
- Applicant's cash match (if requesting equipment)
- Total project costs (Food + Equipment + Match)

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)*

Previous MDA grants

Have you received a previous Farm to School First Bite, Full Tray, Equipment, or Rapid Response Grant? (Yes/No)

If yes, briefly describe your previous grants, including dates, amount awarded, and how you are working towards spending the funds. School districts that received a First Bite Mini Grant or Full Tray Grant in FY 2021 or 2022 are not eligible to apply for a First Bite Mini Grant in FY 2023 but can apply for a Full Tray Grant. *(Maximum 1,000 characters, including spaces)*

Impact on Minnesota agriculture

How will your project increase access to and consumption of local, Minnesota grown and raised foods? *(Maximum 2,000 characters, including spaces)*

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? *(Maximum 2,000 characters, including spaces)*

Impact on socially disadvantaged and emerging farmers

One of the priorities for this grant is to support socially disadvantaged and emerging farmers such as women, veterans, persons with disabilities, Native American/Alaskan Native, communities of color, young and beginning farmers, and LGBTQ+ farmers. How will the proposed project increase Minnesota grown or raised food purchases from socially disadvantaged or emerging farmers? *(Maximum 2,000 characters, including spaces)*

Student and community engagement

How will your school or district promote Minnesota grown and raised food with the cafeteria, classroom, and community? Check all that apply:

- Participate in [Minnesota Harvest of the Month](#)
- Offer entirely locally sourced Minnesota Thursday meals
- Taste tests
- Celebrate [Farm to School Month](#) (October)
- Classroom or school garden activities and lessons
- Field trips
- School or community event(s)
- Other

Describe your plans for implementing the Farm to School events selected above. *(Maximum 2,000 characters, including spaces)*

Measurable outcomes

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

First Bite Food Grant work plan

Complete the following table to outline the steps that you will take to successfully complete your First Bite Food Grant project. For example, you might include target dates for finalizing the items you would like to procure, requesting bids, determining a menu schedule, or training staff. If requesting equipment, you might include target dates for purchasing, installing, and utilizing your new equipment. Not all areas will apply to all projects. You may add additional lines or pages as necessary.

Timeframe	Description of task or action item	Who is responsible?
<i>Ex: February 2023</i>	<i>Request bids from three local farmers for cucumbers</i>	<i>Nutrition Director</i>

AGRI Equipment Grant Funds Request

Are you requesting funds for equipment to support your Farm to School program? (Yes/No)

If yes, how will the equipment help you store, prepare, and serve Minnesota grown and raised foods? *(Maximum 2,000 characters, including spaces)*

Describe your ability to manage and track reporting requirements on the grant for reimbursable equipment expenses and the 1:1 equipment match requirement. *(Maximum 2,000 characters, including spaces)*

AGRI Equipment Grant budget table

Complete the following budget table to detail how you anticipate using your AGRI Equipment award. You should include a description of the item, quantity, cost per unit, total cost, grant funds requested, source of the 1:1 match, and the source of the estimate. If you are selected for an AGRI Equipment grant, this table will become a part of your grant contract. The MDA will award equipment funds to requests that directly support the applicant’s Farm to School efforts. Receiving a First Bite Grant does not guarantee the award of the equipment request.

Equipment description	Quantity	Unit cost	Total cost	Grant funds requested	Source of 1:1 match	Source of estimate
<i>Ex: Robot Coupe</i>	<i>1</i>	<i>\$4,000</i>	<i>\$4,000</i>	<i>\$2,000</i>	<i>Remainder of equipment expense (\$2,000)</i>	<i>Kitchenequipment.com</i>
Total equipment amount requested				\$-.-		