



# FUNDING FARM TO SCHOOL

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**NATIONAL  
FARM to SCHOOL  
NETWORK**

### **GROWING STRONGER TOGETHER**

The National Farm to School Network is an information, advocacy and networking hub for communities working to bring local food sourcing and food and agriculture education into school systems and preschools.

Whether you are in the planning phase, building phase or expanding the capacity and long-term sustainability of a farm to school program, funding is undoubtedly one of your top priorities. There are a variety of organizations, programs and ideas to help you fund farm to school initiatives, including:

- **Government funding** (federal, state or county/municipal)
- **Foundations** (private family, corporate or community)
- **Alternative financial services and social impact investors**
- **Business sponsorships** (local, regional or national)
- **Fundraising events** (dinners, sales, etc.)

### **Federal funding opportunities:**

#### **USDA Farm to School Grant Program**

Through the USDA Farm to School Grant Program, \$5 million in funding is available per year and about \$20,000 - \$100,000 is awarded per grant. In 2014, 71 grants were awarded to projects in 42 states. For more information and to learn if you are eligible to apply, visit the [USDA Farm to School Grant Program's website](#).

#### **USDA Know Your Farmer, Know Your Food Initiative**

Numerous local and regional food systems funding opportunities from USDA are organized under the umbrella of USDA's Know Your Farmer, Know Your Food Initiative (KYF/KYF). A brief sampling is listed here, and check out the [KYF/KYF website](#) to learn more about:

- [Specialty Crop Block Grants](#)
- [Value Added Producer Grants](#)
- [Federal State Marketing Improvement Program \(FSMIP\)](#)

#### **Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC)**

CDC funds state and local public health departments and supports organizations to facilitate farm to school and farm to preschool programs in communities. Visit CDC's website to find contact information for your state's health department.



*Dig in to the world of federal grants!*

## Government grants

Explore government funding opportunities on all levels: federal, state and local. Counties and cities may offer funding for farm to school projects through traditional grants (i.e. agricultural or education grants). Opportunities may also exist with government agencies related to public health, education or the environment. Visit [www.grants.gov](http://www.grants.gov) to find all federal grant opportunities.

## State funding opportunities

States support farm to school in different ways, including: state-level farm to school coordinator positions at state agencies, farm to school grant programs, provision of additional reimbursements for school meals, and more. To find out how your state supports farm to school, see the [“State Farm to School Legislative Survey”](#) on the National Farm to School Network’s website.

## Foundation funding opportunities (local, state or nationwide)

Foundations come in many shapes and sizes including private family foundations, corporate foundations and community foundations. Try researching foundations using [Foundation Directory Online](#).<sup>\*</sup> Reach out to foundations to learn what they fund and what they look for in a grant recipient. Additionally, you increase your chances of receiving funding if you establish an on-going and personal relationship with foundation representatives.

## Alternative financial institutions and social impact investors

There are financial services organizations that provide capital grants and loans to non-profit and for-profit social enterprises and businesses. Check out [RSF Social Finance](#) as an example. There are financial groups that fund projects based on their social impact and a founder’s vision, initiative and ability to impact a community. [Ashoka Changemakers](#) is one such example.

## Business sponsorship

Approach local businesses in your community that have missions aligned with your farm to school efforts, such as grocery stores/co-ops/restaurants that source locally grown products, farm and agriculture stores such as tractor supply stores, local businesses that provide health services, plant nurseries, childcare businesses, etc. Ask them to contribute cash or in-kind donations to your efforts. Spread the word about your program in your community and see what partnerships emerge!



*Find a business that will support training.*

## Fundraising/awareness-raising events

Support your program and build local awareness of your work through special dinners, plant sales, raffles, events in a garden space or other activities where you can highlight your program with people who can financially support your efforts. Look at these events as opportunities to create a personal connection and “buy-in” from community members.

**Final thought:** Reach out to and connect with development professionals and organizations you admire for advice and tips on acquiring funds for your farm to school program. There are many resources and opportunities that exist, in your own backyard and beyond.

*\*Some information on Foundation Directory Online is available for free, but most of the information is through subscription. Check with your local library, many have subscriptions.*

The National Farm to School Network has compiled abundant resources on this topic and others. Find more information and join our network at [www.farmtoschool.org](http://www.farmtoschool.org)