

Connecticut Department of Agriculture

Connecticut Grown for Connecticut Kids Grant

For Connecticut local and regional boards of education, regional education centers, cooperative arrangements, childcare centers, group childcare homes and family childcare homes, or any organization or entity administering or assisting in the development of a farm-to-school program.

FY 2024 Grant Application Guidelines

***Application Deadline:
December 14, 2023 at 4:00pm***



Ned Lamont, Governor
Bryan P. Hurlburt, Commissioner



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Important Dates:

There will be a webinar and question and answer session on Thursday October 26, 2023, from 2:00-3:30 PM. This will be recorded and posted on the [grant webpage](#).

After the webinar, there will be weekly virtual office hours in addition to weekly grant coaching drop-in sessions by area of focus. Available times will be announced at the grant webinar and posted on the webpage.

The application deadline is Thursday December 14, 2023 at 4:00 p.m. Please review the "[Submission Process](#)" section for additional information.

Final Applications must be received by:

December 14, 2023

Applications will not be accepted after 4:00 p.m. on December 14, 2023

For more information, please visit the agency's [CT Grown for CT Kids Grant webpage](#).

Questions can be directed to Cyrena Thibodeau, Cyrena.Thibodeau@ct.gov or 860-895-3094

Grant Description:

The Connecticut Grown for Connecticut Kids Grant Program, hereafter referred to as CTG4CTK Grant, provides funds to Connecticut local or regional boards of education, regional educational service centers, cooperative arrangements pursuant to section [10-158a of the general statutes](#), child care centers, group child care homes and family child care homes, as such terms are described in section [19a-77 of the general statutes](#), or any organization or entity administering or assisting in the development of a farm-to-school program.

DoAg has approximately \$900,000 in funds to award for CT Grown for CT Kids Grant projects in FY 2024.

New this year, an additional \$2 million dedicated to Shipping Container Growing Grants is available for projects connected to Farm to School. Funding for this was provided by state American Rescue Plan Act (ARPA) funds in the 2023 legislative session.

Grant Purpose:

The CTG4CTK Grant shall, “assist schools, school districts, childcare centers and homes, and organizations to develop farm-to-school programs that will increase the availability of local foods in child nutrition programs, allow educators to use hands-on educational techniques to teach students about nutrition and farm-to-school connections, sustain relationships with local farmers and producers, enrich the educational experience of students, improve the health of children in the state and enhance the state's economy.”

These funds are intended to provide a combination of resources to build capacity for long-term Farm to School Programs in schools, school districts, childcare centers and homes.

What is farm to school?

Farm to school enriches the connection communities have with fresh, healthy food and local food producers by changing food purchasing and education practices at schools and early care and education sites.

Students gain access to healthy, local foods as well as education opportunities such as school gardens, cooking lessons, and farm field trips. Farm to school empowers children and their families to make informed food choices while strengthening the local economy and contributing to vibrant communities.

The Shipping Container Growing Grant will provide funds for the purchase and installation of a shipping container growing unit whose farm products grown are connected to a school through a procurement relationship and/or as an educational experience. More information on the Shipping Container Growing Grant is provided in Appendix A.

Awarding Priorities:

- 1) To fund applicants located in alliance districts, as defined in section [10-262u of the general statutes](#), as amended by this act, or who are providers of school readiness programs, as defined in section [10-16p of the general statutes](#)
- 2) To fund applicants who demonstrate a broad commitment from school administrators, school nutrition professionals, educators, and community stakeholders.
 - In the grant narrative, applicants are requested to describe both the support that they have for the project and detail how input was gathered to formulate the idea. Additionally, applicants are

encouraged to submit up to three letters of support, a template is provided on the [grant webpage](#) under documents/forms.

For more information about how these priorities impact your application, please refer to the scoring rubric in Appendix B.

Eligible Applicants:

The following entities are eligible to apply:

1. Local or regional board of education
2. Regional educational service centers
3. A cooperative arrangement pursuant to section 10-158a of the general statutes
4. Childcare centers, group childcare homes and family childcare homes as such terms are described in section 19a-77 of the general statutes
5. Any organization or entity, including CT farmers, administering or assisting in the development of a farm-to-school program

Please note – Entities who have received CTG4CTK funds for the past two funding rounds are not eligible to apply this year. A one-round break in funding is required.

Expenses & Payment:

The maximum amount awarded to any applicant through the CTG4CTK Grant shall not exceed \$50,000.

The maximum amount awarded through the one-time Shipping Container Growing Grant shall not exceed \$250,000.

CT DoAg reserves the right to offer an award amount less than the award requested.

There is no match required for either the CTG4CTk or the Shipping Container Growing Grant.

Combined employee salary and fringe paid to execute and administer the project cannot exceed 50% of grant funds requested. For example, for a project that requested the full \$50,000, no more than \$25,000 in staffing costs can be requested.

The following **expenses** are ineligible and will not be funded:

- Any expense incurred prior to contract execution
- Land acquisition/mortgages
- Cost of borrowing (points and other fees)
- Expenses related to establishing a new organization/business
- Any portion of expense for which the applicant pays a contractor in merchandise or service in lieu of cash
- Tuition/tuition reimbursement or career-related/scholarship funds
- Routine business expenses (utilities, office supplies, etc.)
- Legal expenses related to litigation
- Indirect or contingency costs of any percentage
- Any expense related to lobbying

Payment will be made to applicants using the following payment schedule for all awards.

- Up to 50% of grants funds may be requested as an advance upon signing of the contract.
- The remaining grant funds will be reimbursed after project completion and acceptance of the final report.

Grant Tracks

Applicants must apply under one and only one of the grant tracks below.

Each track has an option to apply for a full grant or a microgrant (up to \$5,000), except track three which is a microgrant only. **Both microgrants and large grants have the same 18-month timeline to complete, allow for 50% fund advance and the remainder is reimbursement. A microgrant has a simpler application and simpler reporting requirements and has a Letter of Award as opposed to a contract with DoAg.**

The one-time Shipping Container Growing grant program has a funding cap of \$250,000 and a 24-month timeline to complete.

Track 1: Farm to School (K-12) Local Procurement Assistance Grant

Track 2: Farm to School (K-12) Experiential Learning Grant

Track 3: Producer Capacity Building Grant

Track 4: Farm to Early Care and Education (ECE) Grant

Track 5: Shipping Container Growing Grant ***New for FY 2024 only**

If you have any questions about a project qualifying for these funds or which category to apply under, please contact Cyrena Thibodeau at CT Department of Agriculture.

Track 1: Connecticut Farm to School (K-12) Local Procurement Assistance Grant

Purpose: To help increase the amount of CT Grown farm products incorporated into school meal programs and facilitate direct relationships between schools and producers. Applicants are strongly encouraged to incorporate engaging educational and marketing activities to educate students about where the products came from and to increase exposure to agriculture. Many resources can be found on the [Put Local on your Tray website](#).

Applicants who seek to fund a procurement focused project for K-12 should apply under this category. Early Childcare Providers should not apply under this category.

Tip: *This is a great way to make the most of your Local Food for Schools Incentive Program funding through the CT Department of Education!*

Additionally, in the 2023 legislative session, state funding was passed to provide reimbursement funds to schools that purchase locally grown foods. We highly encourage applications focused on equipment, training, and processing that make buying and incorporating local products more feasible.

Project Examples (projects can incorporate multiple components and please note that you are not limited to those listed):

- Purchasing equipment that will enable the applicant to process and store produce during the height of the growing season for use during the school year such as a blast chiller, industrial chest freezer, vegetable slicing equipment, etc.
- Professional development and skills training for food service staff in how to process and prepare fresh food.
- Creation of regional producer trainings, technical assistance or the creation/expansion of aggregation groups for selling to schools.
- Activities focused on increasing awareness and education about CT Grown farm products such as a community dinner or taste tests.

Track 2: Connecticut Farm to School Experiential Learning Grant

Purpose: This grant track is for the development and/or implementation of Farm to School experiential learning opportunities for students and/or educators such as school gardens, agriculture education, and professional development for educators.

Applicants who seek to fund an experiential learning focused project for K-12 should apply under this category. Producers who want to implement on farm education programs should partner with a school district to apply under this category. Producers and Early Childcare Providers should not apply under this category.

Project Examples (projects can incorporate multiple components and please note that you are not limited to those listed):

- Materials and installation for a school garden. This could include, but is not limited to, materials for raised bed construction (CT Grown lumber and CT Grown compost preferred), purchase of a greenhouse or tower gardens for multiple classrooms.
- Curriculum design and/or implementation of lessons to integrate a school garden into classroom learning.
- Agricultural education and experiences such as farm field trips, gleaning on farms, stipends to bring a farmer to the classroom.
- Professional development for educators to create/integrate farm to school education within existing curriculum.
- Hands on culinary and nutrition education for students using CT Grown products. No more than 10% of the budget should be spent on local food purchases of farm products.

Track 3: Connecticut Producer Capacity Building Grant

Purpose: This grant category provides financial resources to Connecticut producers for projects and training that must be directly associated with increasing farm sales to schools. *Please note, this is a microgrant only category (\$5,000 and under awards).*

Producers, producer cooperatives, and farm aggregators should apply under this track. K-12 and Early Childcare Providers should not apply under this category.

Project Examples (projects can incorporate multiple components and please note that you are not limited to those listed):

- Equipment costs for harvest, wash and pack, sorting, and/or transportation of farm products to schools and ECE buyers.
- Infrastructure such as high tunnels and/or storage to allow for season extension.

- **Tip:** We highly recommend exploring applying to USDA Natural Resource Conservation Service's [EQIP](#) program and using this grant funding as matching funds.
- Required trainings and certifications (such as food safety) needed to sell to local schools. *Note please inquire with your local school district about their requirements.

For producers interested in projects above \$5,000, please consider [DoAg's Farm Transition Grant](#).

Track 4: Connecticut Farm to Early Care and Education (ECE) Grant

Purpose: Early Childcare Education (ECE) is a critical component of farm to schoolwork, yet many operate very differently from K-12 education, thus we have created a separate track for all ECE providers and networks to apply under. Applicants under this category will only be evaluated against each other.

Only ECE providers and ECE networks should apply under this track.

Project Examples (projects can incorporate multiple components please note that you are not limited to those listed):

- Purchase of Community Supported Agriculture (CSA) shares for students and families.
- Purchase of CT Grown farm products for integration into student snacks/meals with clear educational farm and/or nutrition connection.
- Purchase and installation of raised garden beds or indoor growing systems/container gardens, tools, and equipment for experiential learning.
- Development/expansion of agriculture curriculum for students.
- Establishing and expanding Farm to ECE Networks.
- Professional Development Trainings for staff.
- Family engagement activities such as the creation of recipe books, cooking classes and/or take-home taste tests.
- Farm field trip and farmer visit to school(s).

Track 5: Shipping Container Growing Grant * New for FY 24

Purpose: This grant category provides funding through the American Rescue Plan Act for the purchase and installation of a shipping container farm. DoAg will award up to \$250,000 per project, not to exceed \$2 million dollars under this category. These projects must be completed within 24 months.

This category is open to all eligible applicants who are interested in working with a public school to sell or utilize the products grown, or for educational opportunities. Producers, schools, and non-profits may apply.

- Applicant must have a clearly established relationship with a school and a plan for how the product grown will be incorporated into the schools.
- Applicants must be able to provide evidence that proper permission is granted for the location of the unit should the project be awarded.

Project Examples:

- A producer could apply for a shipping container grant in collaboration with a school that would be a buyer of their products. The shipping container could be located either at the farm or on the school property.

- A school could apply for a shipping container grant in collaboration with a producer who would manage the operation. In this situation, the shipping container would likely be located on the school property.

Eligible Expenses:

- Purchase of a shipping container farm either as a prefabricated kit or as a build-your-own setup.
- Installation, renovations, and costs such as a water hookup, electrical hookup and/or solar panels.

Please see Appendix A for additional guidance. Participating in the webinar is strongly encouraged if you're going to pursue a project under this track. Please reach out to Cyrena Thibodeau to discuss your interest and plans in this grant track.

Project Duration & Post Award Requirements

CTG4CTK Grant projects must be **completed within 18 months** of contract execution. Contract and project extensions are not allowed.

Shipping Container Grant projects must be **completed within 24 months** of contract execution. Contract and project extensions are not allowed.

Applicants of awarded projects will be responsible for the following:

1. Signing an agreement with the State of Connecticut
2. Providing a Certificate of Insurance holding the state harmless or listing the state as an additional insured on the grantee's liability insurance policy
3. Completing the project within the contractual timeframe
4. Submitting a final project report including a sustainability plan in the required format per the executed contract
5. Submitting a final financial report itemizing actual expenses. Copies of invoices and proof of payment must be submitted with the payment request at the conclusion of the project
6. Agreeing to a site inspection once the project is complete and prior to final payment being released (if applicable)
7. Other requirements as outlined in the State of Connecticut contract

Grantees will have additional training on requirements once contracts are executed.

In addition, each awardee will:

- Receive targeted group technical assistance related to your project area as well as additional one-on-one assistance as needed throughout the project timeline.
- Attend at least one convening with other grantees during the duration of the project for networking and resource sharing.

Submission Process:

All CTG4CTK Grant applications and attachments are required to be submitted through the agency's Cognito Portal <https://www.cognitofrms.com/CTDoAg/CTGrownForCTKidsGrantApplicationFY2024>
For any technical questions, please contact Cyrena Thibodeau at CT DoAg.

Application Requirements:

For grant requests \$5,000 and under

1. Completion of the microgrant template to be uploaded to Cognito forms. Template should be downloaded from [DoAg CTG4CTK informational webpage](#) and then uploaded to your application as an attachment.

For grant requests for \$5,001-\$50,000

1. Completion of the grant narrative.
2. Excel Workbook with completed Budget and Budget Narrative. Template should be downloaded from the [DoAg CTG4CTK informational webpage](#) and then uploaded to your application as an attachment in the grant portal.

For the shipping container grant program

1. Completion of the specific shipping container grant narrative.
2. Excel Workbook with completed Budget and Budget Narrative. Template should be downloaded from the [DoAg CTG4CTK informational webpage](#) and then uploaded to your application as an attachment in the grant portal.

For all grant requests

1. *(Optional)* Up to three letters of support demonstrating that there is support for this effort from applicable stakeholders such as school administration, school nutrition professionals, educators, producers, and community stakeholders. A template is available for download from the [DoAg grant information webpage](#) and then uploaded to your application in Cognito.
2. If applicable, estimates/quotes for services and infrastructure uploaded to your application in Cognito.
2. Any additional conceptual drawings, stories, videos the applicant would like to share related to the project can be uploaded to your application in Cognito.
3. W9 and Vendor form which can be found on the [DoAg grant information webpage](#) and uploaded to your application in Cognito. *Please note, K-12 public schools are already registered in the state payment system and are not required to complete this. For producers, non-profits, and ECE's please inquire if you do not know if you are an established vendor with the state.

Evaluation Criteria and Process:

The CTG4CTK is a competitive grant. Only complete applications, as outlined above which are submitted on time, will be evaluated. The evaluation will be weighted heavily on the project impact and work plan described in the grant narrative. Applications will be evaluated by an advisory team after an administrative review by DoAg. Please see Appendix B for the scoring rubric.

Budget & Budget Narrative Justification (For proposals from \$5,001-\$50,000 and Shipping Container Grants)

The Budget and the Budget Narrative Explanation will need to be filled out in the Excel fillable form found on DoAg's [CTG4CTK informational webpage](#) and must be added as an attachment to your Cognito application.

Appendix A: Shipping Container Growing Grant Supplemental Guidance

Passed in the 2023 legislative session, DoAg received funding to administer one-time grants for the purchase and installation of shipping container growing units. Projects must benefit public school students- this could be through utilizing product grown in the unit in school meals or also incorporating educational opportunities for students.

What is a shipping container growing unit?

A shipping container growing unit is a form of climate-controlled agriculture in which products are typically grown hydroponically (can be vertical or horizontal) in the retrofitted shipping container. Shipping container units can be effective ways to grow year-round on limited land and may have significant water savings.

What companies could I look to for purchasing a unit?

There are many companies on the market that manufacture shipping containers, a few to explore are Freight Farms, Farm Box Foods, Crop Box, and Grow Pod Solutions as well as several others you can find online that suits your needs. Units can be self-made; however, we recommend this only to applicants who can demonstrate significant prior experience with this work.

What are additional eligible costs that this grant could cover?

In addition to the cost of the unit itself, applicants are encouraged to consider and include costs related to the delivery and installation (including connecting water and electricity and solar panels if interested), any initial supplies needed, initial software management subscriptions, and initial operational costs (for the time covered under the grant). **Applicants should be able to demonstrate sufficient funding and capacity to continue the management of the unit after the grant period.**

Shipping Container farms should not be taken on lightly, they require a significant labor investment to manage them effectively. We will have several specific open office hours focused on shipping containers where we will bring in individuals currently growing in these units in CT to ask questions of.

If you wish to discuss this further, please contact Cyrena.Thibodeau@ct.gov or 860-895-3094

Appendix B: Scoring Rubrics

FY 24 CT Grown for CT Kids Microgrant Scoring Rubric

Possible 55 pts

Is the location of where project will take place in an Alliance District or a school which provides a School Readiness Program? (5 pts and a yes/no question)

Introduction (up to 10 points)

1. Does the application clearly identify who the audience served is and who will benefit from the project? (0-5pts)
2. Does the applicant demonstrate sufficient readiness to undertake the project? (0-5pts)

Project Workplan (up to 10 points)

1. Does the project clearly identify what it will accomplish and how? (0-5pts)
2. Is the timeline reasonable to accomplish the proposed project? (0-5 pts)

Project Impact (up to 10 points)

1. Does the project clearly explain how it will contribute to the creation/furthering of a Farm to School program? (0-10 points)

Demonstration of Broad Support and Commitment (up to 10 points)

1. Does the application demonstrate that there is broad support for the project and/or detail how input was gathered to formulate the idea? (0-10 points)

Project Budget (up to 10 points)

1. Is the submitted budget reasonable and cost effective to accomplish the project? (0-10 points)

FY 24 CT Grown for CT Kids Full Grant Scoring Rubric

Possible 110 pts

Is the location of where project will take place in an Alliance District or a school which provides a School Readiness Program? (5 pts and a yes/no question)

Introduction (up to 15 points)

1. Does the application clearly identify who the audience served is and who will benefit from the project? (0-10pts)
2. Does the applicant demonstrate sufficient readiness to undertake the project? (0-5pts)

Project Explanation (up to 20 points)

1. Does the project clearly explain how it will contribute to the creation/furthering of a Farm to School program? (0-10 points)
2. Does the project clearly identify what it will accomplish and how? (0-10 pts)

Project Outcome and Impact (up to 20 points)

1. Has a quantifiable outcome(s) been identified as a result of the project? (0-10 points)
2. Does the application explain how project outcome(s) will be evaluated? (0-10 points)

Project Workplan and Budget (up to 25 points)

1. Is the timeline reasonable to accomplish the proposed project? (0-5 points)
2. Do the tasks encompass the entirety of the project? Is there anything missing/forgotten? (0-5 points)
3. Is the submitted budget reasonable and cost efficient to accomplish the project? (0-10 points)
4. How well does the proposal explain each identified cost? (0-5 points)

Demonstration of Broad Support and Commitment (up to 15 points)

1. Does the application demonstrate that there is broad support for the project and/or detail how input was gathered to formulate the idea? (0-15 points) *From narrative and letters of support

Project Sustainability Plan (up to 10 points)

1. Does the application state how this project could contribute to the longevity of a Farm to School Program and outline steps that could be taken beyond the grant? (0-10 points)

FY 24 Shipping Container Grant Scoring Rubric

Possible 130 points

The Shipping Container Growing Grant will use the same rubric as the CT Grown for CT Kids Full Grant with the additional points for the supplemental questions.

Shipping Container Supplemental Questions (up to 20 points)

1. Does the applicant demonstrate adequate experience with hydroponics and/or shipping container growing among the project team OR express a clear plan for gaining that experience? (0-10 points)
2. Does the applicant demonstrate a clearly articulated plan for the management and maintenance of the shipping container? (0-10 points)