



Connecticut Food Policy Council

Food System Capacity Building Grants

For Local Food Policy Councils and/or food working groups
agricultural producers, singularly or jointly, provided such producers are owners or tenants of
existing agribusiness within the State of Connecticut, food pantries, and farmers' markets,
singularly or jointly.

FY 2024 Grant Application Guidelines

Application Deadline:

March 6, 2024

Ned Lamont, Governor
Bryan P. Hurlburt, Commissioner

Connecticut Department of Agriculture
450 Columbus Boulevard, Suite 703, Hartford, CT 06103

www.CTGrown.gov

Table of Contents

Important Dates	3
Grant Description:	4
Eligible Applicants:	5
Expenses & Payment:.....	6
Grant Categories	7
Awarding Priorities.....	9
Application Requirements:.....	9
Evaluation Criteria and Process:.....	10
Budget & Budget Narrative Justification.....	11
Grant Narrative.....	Error! Bookmark not defined.
Appendix A: Scoring Rubric.....	11

Summary of Important Dates & Key Information

There will be a webinar and question and answer session on **February 8, 2024 from 2-3pm**. Please register for the webinar [HERE](#) or by going to www.CTGrown.gov/grants and selecting Food System Capacity Building Grant (FSCB) This will be recorded and posted on the [FSCB Grant webpage](#).

Please review the “Application Process” section for additional information for requirements, documents, and forms. All forms are required to be uploaded onto [Cognito](#) prior to the grant close date. Allot enough time to properly upload, view forms and become familiar with the system. No exceptions will be made for late submissions.

Final applications must be received by:
Wednesday March 6, 2024, at 4:00 p.m.

Applications will not be accepted after 4:00 p.m.
Questions can be directed to:

Hannah Carty, Hannah.Carty@ct.gov (860) 471-1620

OR

Cyrena Thibodeau, Cyrena.Thibodeau@ct.gov (860) 895-3094

Grant Description:

The Food System Capacity Building Grant provides funds to Connecticut organizations and groups involved in food system policy or creating innovative, localized, programming in their respective communities to increase food access and address food insecurity. Any proposal from an eligible applicant that seeks to improve the local food system and make food, particularly CT Grown farm products, more accessible to Connecticut residents will be considered.

Funding for the **Food System Capacity Building (FSCB) Grant** is provided through the Connecticut Food Policy Council under [C.G.S. Sec. 22-456](#). The FSCB Grant Program and any awards are subject to limitations of state funding.

The maximum amount awarded to any applicant through the Connecticut Food Policy Grant shall not exceed \$20,000.00 for an 18-month grant period. There is no match requirement for this grant.

Grant Purpose:

The FSCB Grant is intended to support Connecticut communities, projects, or programs that:

1. Increase the use of, awareness of, and access to healthy food;
2. Support stakeholders in collaborative work to address local food system issues;
3. Support the creation or continuation of local food policy councils, anti-hunger coalitions, and similar working groups or networks focused on food systems, food access, food sovereignty, and/or community food security; or
4. Support projects that include community-driven solutions to create a more just food system that empowers communities to grow, process, prepare, sell, and eat culturally preferred healthy foods.

Definitions:

For the purposes of this funding proposal request, the following definitions are used:

Culturally Relevant Foods: Culturally relevant foods (CRF) are food items that hold significance for a particular culture or subcultural group.

Equity: The term “equity” means the consistent and systematic fair, just, and impartial treatment of all individuals, including individuals who belong to underserved communities that have been denied such treatment, such as Black, Latino, and Indigenous and Native American persons, Asian Americans and Pacific Islanders and other persons of color; members of religious minorities; lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender, and queer (LGBTQ+) persons; persons with disabilities; persons who live in rural areas; and persons otherwise adversely affected by persistent poverty or inequality.

Food Insecurity: The disruption of food intake or eating patterns because of lack of money and/or other resources. This definition is adapted from research published by the USDA’s

Household Food Security in the United States, 2005. The Study can be accessed through this report link:

https://www.ers.usda.gov/webdocs/publications/45655/29206_err29_002.pdf?v=41334

Food System: Encompass the entire range of actors and their interlinked value-adding activities involved in the production, aggregation, processing, distribution, consumption and disposal of food products that originate from agriculture, forestry or fisheries, and parts of the broader economic, societal and natural environments in which they are embedded. The food system is composed of sub-systems (e.g. farming system, waste management system, input supply system, etc.) and interacts with other key systems (e.g. energy system, trade system, health system, etc.). Therefore, a structural change in the food system might originate from a change in another system; for example, a policy promoting more biofuel in the energy system will have a significant impact on the food system. This definition is from, “*Sustainable Food Systems: Concept and Framework*” Food and Agriculture Organization. *Please view <https://www.fao.org/3/ca2079en/CA2079EN.pdf> for more information.*

Food Sovereignty: Food sovereignty is the right of peoples to healthy and culturally appropriate food produced through ecologically sound and sustainable methods, and their right to define their own food and agriculture systems. It puts the aspirations and needs of those who produce, distribute, and consume food at the heart of food systems and policies rather than the demands of markets and corporations. *This definition and other key values of food sovereignty can be found at <https://usfoodsovereigntyalliance.org/what-is-food-sovereignty/>.*

Underserved Communities: refers to populations, as previously defined in the preceding term “equity” who share a particular characteristic, as well as geographic communities, that have been systematically denied a full opportunity to participate in aspects of economic, social, and civic life.

Environmental Justice Communities: In CT, an environmental justice community is defined by the Connecticut General Statutes as:

- a [distressed municipality](#), as designated by the Connecticut Department of Economic and Community Development; OR
- defined census block groups where 30% of the population is living below 200% of the federal poverty level.

For more information, please visit <https://portal.ct.gov/DEEP/Environmental-Justice/05-Learn-More-About-Environmental-Justice-Communities>

Eligible Applicants:

The following entities are eligible to apply for the FSCB Grant:

1. Local Food Policy Councils and/or food working groups
2. Agricultural producers, singularly or jointly, provided such producers are owners of existing agribusiness within the State of Connecticut
3. Food pantries

4. Farmers' markets, singularly or jointly

All applicants shall be in good standing with the Department of Agriculture, and in compliance with Connecticut and federal laws.

Expenses & Payment:

The maximum amount awarded to any applicant through the Food System Capacity Building Grant shall not exceed \$20,000.00.

The Connecticut Food Policy Council reserves the right to offer an award amount less than the award requested.

There is no match required for the Food System Capacity Building Grant.

Combined employee salary and fringe paid to execute and directly administer the project cannot exceed 25% of grant funds requested. Projects which fall under the grant category of **“Creation or Continuance of a Local Food Policy Council or Food Working Group”** will have no limit for staffing a food policy council, anti-hunger coalition, or similar working group, which is focused on food systems, food security, food sovereignty, and/or food access.

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.

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

- Any expense incurred prior to contract execution;
- Land acquisition/mortgages;
- Cost of borrowing (interest, 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 amount;
- Any expense related to lobbying; and
- Any open agreement and/or project in progress already funded through a grant from CT DoAg or any other CT state agency.

All eligible expenses funded by any FSCB Grant must address food systems issues in a Connecticut community supporting new and recently emerging projects or programs.

The FSCB Grant must be paid directly to the individual or business with whom the contract is made.

Grant Categories:

Applicants must select one of the grant categories to apply under. If your project incorporates multiple components, please apply under the category that best reflects the project's focus. Examples of eligible projects are provided for each category. Examples reflect the intent and purpose of the grant category.

Awardees from the previous FSCB grant (FY 23) may apply again for any of the categories, but if awarded this year, you must take a year off from applying to a future round. If applying for a similar project that was previously awarded, the applicant must discuss the new and additional work that is to be completed.

If you have any questions about project eligibility or corresponding categories, please contact Hannah Carty at Hannah.Carty@ct.gov or Cyrena Thibodeau at Cyrena.Thibodeau@ct.gov.

1. Creation or Continuance of a Local Food Policy Council or Food Working Group

Purpose: This grant category provides financial resources to cover costs of development and/or implementation of food working groups or local food policy councils to address food insecurity in Connecticut municipalities.

Examples of eligible projects in this category:

- Building the framework for the creation or continuance of a local food policy council/food network, including training of staff.
- Conducting a community needs assessment.
- Increasing capacity to conduct community outreach, hold meetings and build community momentum.
- Developing a local food action plan and/or food policy agenda.

2. Equipment

Purpose: This grant category provides financial resources to cover costs of equipment associated with projects that would create and/or further food access to underserved communities.

Examples of eligible projects in this category:

- Purchasing equipment that will enable the applicant to process and store CT Grown farm products during the height of the growing season to increase availability of CT Grown fruits, vegetables, dairy, meat, and other farm products in underserved neighborhoods.

3. Local Food Access

Purpose: To expand access to local food buying opportunities in food insecure and low food access communities. This could be done through efforts such as creating mobile or pop-up

farmers markets at strategic locations, increasing acceptance and redemption of nutrition assistance benefits at farmer's markets, and increasing community outreach and marketing of available resources and opportunities.

Examples of eligible projects in this category:

- Perform outreach to farmers to accept benefit programs at farmers' markets.
- Purchase of SNAP processing infrastructure for producers and markets.
- Creation of/supporting mobile farmers markets and pop-up markets.
- Development of programs and materials to increase accessibility and/or education on the value of consuming fresh fruits and vegetables at markets.
- Taste testing and hands on culinary and nutrition education using CT Grown products. Under this category, a portion of the funds can be used for the purchase of CT Grown ingredients.
- Develop events and opportunities that encourage the use of SNAP, Farmers Market Nutrition Program, and other food benefits programs at farmers' markets including outreach and promotion up to 15% of the total grant award.

4. Food Waste and Recovery

Purpose: To support projects that reduce food loss and waste, recovery efforts, and recycling programs.

Examples of eligible projects in this category:

- Promote food waste diversion solutions.
- Expand outreach through research and education efforts such as incorporating food waste and food security into curriculums and engaging students in and out of classroom settings.
- Develop or expand composting programs.
- Aid in development of gleaning programs to recover unused foods from producers.

The CT Department of Energy and Environmental Protection offers more information on current initiatives at their [Composting and Organic Recycling website](#).

Additional, relevant funding opportunities may be available through other organizations:

1. Funding for greenhouses/high tunnels may be available through the Natural Resources Conservation Service. [High Tunnel System Initiative | NRCS \(usda.gov\)](#)
2. Funding for community gardens may also be available through the Urban Green and Community Gardens Program administered by the Connecticut Department of Energy and Environmental Protection. [Urban Green and Community Garden Grant Program \(ct.gov\)](#)
3. The CT Department of Energy and Environmental Protection offers more information on current initiatives at their [Composting and Organic Recycling website](#).
4. The [CT Grown for CT Kids Grant](#) through the Department of Agriculture is a potential source of funding to explore for producers, K-12, and early childcare providers for equipment purchases with the purpose of increasing CT Grown farm product in schools.
5. [EndHunger CT](#) may have funding available to support SNAP doubling programs at farmers markets in the state.

6. [The CT Ag Enhancement Grant](#) (previously the Ag Viability grant) through the Department of Agriculture is open to municipalities, regional planning organizations, associations of municipalities, and agricultural non-profits and may be an option for those pursuing work on benefits programs.
7. [MarketLink SNAP Equipment Grant](#) - MarketLink Offers Farmers and Farmers Markets a Streamlined Solution and Free Equipment for Accepting SNAP/EBT, Credit/Debit, and Other Electronic Payments.

CT DoAg offers many grants to producers, non-profits, municipalities and agricultural cooperatives. Please visit the website at <https://portal.ct.gov/DOAG/Commissioner/Commissioner/Agency-Grants-and-Loans> to learn more.

Awarding Priorities:

Applications that demonstrate these priorities during the evaluation process, may receive a higher score.

1. Projects that prioritize capacity building of groups who are working on systemic, holistic approaches to feeding people and working in sectors throughout the food system.
2. Projects led by marginalized communities including black, indigenous, people of color (BIPOC), members of the LGBTQ+ community, and persons with disabilities.
3. If a project incorporates procurement, then projects who purchase CT Grown farm products may receive priority.
4. Projects that take place in and benefit CT [environmental justice communities](#) that support food systems.

Application Requirements:

A complete application includes:

1. A complete Grant Narrative.
2. Excel Workbook with a complete Budget, Budget Narrative, and Timeline. Template should be downloaded from the CT DoAg Webpage and then uploaded to your application as an attachment.
3. Optional, up to three letters of support demonstrating that there is support for this effort from relevant 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.
4. If applicable, estimates/quotes for services and infrastructure uploaded to your application in Cognito.
5. Any additional conceptual drawings, stories, videos the applicant would like to share related to the project can be uploaded to your application in Cognito.

6. W9 and Vendor form which can be found on the DoAg grant information webpage and uploaded to your application in Cognito.

Submission Process:

All Food System Capacity Building Grant applications and attachments are required to be submitted through the [Department of Agriculture's Cognito Portal](#). For any technical questions, please contact Hannah Carty at Hannah.Carty@ct.gov or Cyrena Thibodeau at Cyrena.Thibodeau@ct.gov.

For additional information on the grant application submission process, we encourage attendance at the **grant writing workshop on February 8, 2024**.

Applicants should consider applying well in advance of the grant deadline, as CT DoAg will not review any applications submitted late, even if technical issues prevented the applicant from submitting on time. Applicants are encouraged to familiarize themselves with the portal prior to submission and to communicate timely with CT DoAg if there are accessibility or other concerns.

Evaluation Criteria and Process:

The FSCB Grant 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 plan described in the Grant Narrative. Applications will be reviewed by the Connecticut Food Policy Council after an administrative review by DoAg. See Appendix A for the scoring rubric.

Project Duration & Post Award Requirements

Projects must be **completed within 18 months** of contract execution. Contract and project extensions are not allowed. **Applicants should be prepared for an anticipated contract start date of May 1, 2024.**

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 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 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, if necessary, once the project is complete and prior to final payment being released;
7. Attending at least one virtual meeting with other grantees and Council members during the duration of the project for networking and resource sharing; and
8. Other requirements as outlined in the State of Connecticut contract. Grantees will have additional training on requirements once contracts are executed.

Upon receiving an award, awardees will receive guidance on necessary contract requirements from the CT DoAg program coordinator.

Grantees will have additional training on requirements once contracts are executed which will include being matched with CT food policy council member(s) to work with throughout the project's lifetime to receive support and technical assistance as needed.

Budget & Budget Narrative Justification:

The Budget and the Budget Narrative Explanation will need to be filled out in the Excel fillable workbook found on DoAg's [Food System Capacity Building Grant Program \(ct.gov\)](#) and must be added as an attachment to your Cognito application.

Grant Narrative

The Grant Narrative will need to be filled out in the Microsoft Word document found on DoAg's [Food System Capacity Building Grant Program \(ct.gov\)](#) and must be added as an attachment to your Cognito application.

The information provided below for the Grant Narrative is for informational purposes only. The Grant Narrative will be completed and submitted through DoAg's Grant portal.

Supporting materials, such as resumes and letters of support and/or commitment can be submitted as .pdf attachments.

For all application categories, applicants must answer the following questions.

1. Introduce the organization, council, or network to the reviewers, to include at least the following information:
 - a. Describe the population that you serve overall and who will specifically benefit from this project.
 - b. Please explain how your project will serve marginalized, environmental justice, and/or low-income communities if applicable.
 - c. Describe any past and current food system initiatives, if applicable, and why the applicant is ready and able to begin or further programming.
2. Explain in detail the project proposal and how it will contribute to the creation/furthering of a local food system network and/or increasing food access in Connecticut. Please include details of what the project will be accomplished and how it will be accomplished.
3. Identify at least one outcome you strive to achieve as a result of completing this project. Identify the activities necessary to meet the outcome(s) and how you will evaluate if the project outcome(s) were met?

[Here](#) is a good resource developed by [California Department of Food and Agriculture](#) on what project outcomes are, please note these are not specific to this grant program.

Outcomes: This is the intended impact of the project that can be evaluated. An outcome is measurable and observable, it can be quantitative or qualitative but must be impactful and specific.

Ex. X number of community members will have monthly planned meetings on developing a local food policy plan.

Activities: Actions or measurable steps taken to reach an outcome

Ex. Outreach and marketing will be conducted to increase community awareness and attendance.

4. What other funding sources have you sought and/or received to support this project?
5. Explain who your project/program reaches and the potential impacts to individuals and communities (direct or intended). Include how your projects/programs will serve neighborhoods identified as focus areas and those that impact under-served/underrepresented communities in Connecticut.
6. Describe what areas of Connecticut your project will serve, how your project is serving the area. (i.e., project/program is working within a specific community center, etc.), how members of these communities have been engaged with the proposed project, and how you plan on engaging them.
7. Include all project milestones and related deadlines. Applicants must budget in three months to plan the project once the contract is executed, 18 months to execute and complete the project, and 30 days past project completion for all reporting. As a reminder no extensions will be given. No incomplete projects will be funded.

Project Workplan

Activity	Anticipated Timeline	Completed by Who?

8. Describe the team involved in completing this project and how you will work with any partners. Please also describe the community support that you have for this project from stakeholders relevant to the project and how they will be involved throughout its lifetime.
9. How will this project contribute to building long-term resilience, equity, and sustainability

in the local food system? What steps will you take to ensure that the program continues beyond the timeline of this grant?

APPENDIX A
FY 24 Food System Capacity Building Grant Scoring Rubric

Introduction

1. How clearly did the applicant identify who the audience served is and who will benefit from the project specifically.
2. How effectively will they serve marginalized and/or low-income communities (populations of focus)? (
3. Did the applicant demonstrate readiness to undertake the project.

Project Explanation

1. How have the contributions of the project worked towards the creation/furthering of a local food system network and/or increasing food access in Connecticut.
2. How clearly does the applicant identify what it will accomplish and how?

Project Outcome and Impact

1. Did the applicant identify quantifiable outcome(s) and their intended impact?
2. To what extent the listed activities will achieve the intended outcome and desired impact?
3. To what extent the applicant will be able to measure their success and impact of the identified outcomes?

Project Timeline and Budget

1. Is the timeline reasonable to accomplish the proposed project?
2. Is the submitted budget reasonable and cost effective to accomplish the project?
3. How well does the proposal explain each identified cost?

Project Team and Community Support

1. Did the applicant demonstrate the capacity of the team and partners that will be involved in completing this project.
2. Did the applicant effectively describe the level of community support for the project and how intentionally the applicant will keep relevant stakeholders engaged throughout the project's lifetime if applicable.

Project Sustainability Plan

1. How could this project contribute to building long-term resilience, equity, and sustainability in the local food system? Evaluate the level of effort the applicant makes to identify any steps they will take to ensure that the program and/or impacts continues beyond the timeline of this grant.

Application Prioritization

1. Does this project prioritize capacity building of groups who are working on systemic, holistic approaches to feeding people and working in sectors throughout the food system?
2. Does this project support organizations and groups that are led by marginalized communities including black, indigenous, people of color (BIPOC), members of the LGBTQ+ community, and persons with disabilities?
3. Will this project benefit residents of an environmental justice community?