

Connecticut Department of Agriculture

Local Food Purchase Assistance Grant

Open to Food hubs and other CT aggregators, food pantries, soup kitchens, and pantry networks, municipalities, producer cooperatives or informal groups of producers with a fiduciary agent, community health centers, mutual aid networks, faith-based organizations, senior centers, for-profit and non-profit grocery stores, as well as food cooperatives, small food retailers such as corner stores, convenience stores, farmers' markets, mobile food markets, or retail food outlets operated by an emergency food program or food hub.

FY 2022 Grant Application Guidelines

Application Deadline:

May 31, 2022 at 4:00 PM



**Ned Lamont, Governor
Bryan P. Hurlburt, Commissioner**



Connecticut Department of Agriculture
450 Columbus Boulevard, Suite 701, Hartford, CT 06103

CTGrown.gov

Contents

Summary of Important Dates & Key Information:	3
Grant Opportunity & Purpose	4
Definitions	4
Eligible Applicants and/or Distribution Sites	5
Project & Application Requirements	5
Expenses & Payment	7
Submission Process	8
Evaluation Criteria and Process	8
Project Duration & Post Award Requirements.....	8

Summary of Important Dates & Key Information:

1. There will be a webinar and question and answer session on Wednesday May 4, 2022 from 4:00-5:00pm. Please register for the webinar [HERE](#) or by going to www.CTGrown.gov/grants and selecting Local Food Purchase Assistance Cooperative Program (LFPA). This will be recorded and posted on the [LFPA webpage](#).
2. A step-by-step guide walking through how to submit your application via the grant submission portal is posted on [the LFPA webpage](#).
3. Please review the “Application Process” section for additional information for requirements, documents and forms. All forms are required to be uploaded to the system prior to the close date. Allot enough time to properly upload, view forms and become familiar with the system. No exceptions will be made for late submissions.
4. Final Applications must be received no later than 4:00 pm (EST) on **May 31st, 2022**
5. Applications will not be accepted after 4:00 p.m. through the portal. If you are working on a grant after 4:00 p.m. on the 31st, even if the system allows you to submit your grant, your grant will be ineligible for review.
6. Questions may be directed to Cyrena Thibodeau, Cyrena.Thibodeau@ct.gov or 860-895-3094.

Grant Opportunity & Purpose

The Connecticut Department of Agricultural (CT DoAg) is soliciting applications for projects that specifically address goals for the Local Food Purchase Assistance Cooperative Agreement Program (LFPA) offered through the United States Department of Agriculture (USDA).

CT DoAg has a total of \$1.5 million available to award through a competitive grant process. Funding for the LFPA Grant is provided by the USDA Agriculture Marketing Service. More details on LFPA can be found on the [USDA's website](#) and through reading the complete [request for applications](#) (RFA).

The purpose of CT DoAg's LFPA grant program is to maintain and improve food and agricultural supply chain resiliency through:

1. supporting local and socially disadvantaged producers* through building and expanding economic opportunity, and
2. establishing and broadening partnerships with producers, the food distribution community, and local food networks to ensure the distribution of fresh and nutritious foods in rural, remote, or underserved communities.**

These funds are meant to provide a combination of financial and technical assistance resources to facilitate projects and relationships that will help build long-term market opportunities and increase food supply chain resiliency.

Definitions

For the purposes of this funding, the following terms are defined as:

*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 one 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.

Further, the Small Business Administration defines **socially disadvantaged individuals** are those who have been subjected to racial or ethnic prejudice or cultural bias within American society because of their identities as members of groups and without regard to their individual qualities. The social disadvantage must stem from circumstances beyond their control.

****Underserved communities** are those defined in accordance with [Exec Order 13985](#), Executive Order on Advancing Racial Equity and Support for Underserved Communities Through the Federal Government, Jan 20, 2021:

For purposes of this order: (a) 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. (b) The term "**underserved communities**"

refers to populations sharing 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, as exemplified by the list in the preceding definition of “**equity**.”

***USDA National Agricultural Statistics Service defines **small producers** as those that have an annual gross cash farm income (GCFI) of less than \$250,000. Socially Disadvantaged producers/vendors and small producers are not exclusive of one another.

**** ALICE Families are Asset Limited Income Constrained Employed. These food insecure families are considered to be among the “working” poor. These families are often overlooked by traditional federal aid programs because the family income is above the federal poverty guidelines. For more information on ALICE guidelines and demographics, please visit: [Connecticut ALICE \(ctunitedway.org\)](http://ctunitedway.org)

Eligible Applicants and/or Distribution Sites

The following entities are **eligible** to apply:

1. Food hubs and other CT aggregators
2. Food pantries, soup kitchens, and pantry networks
3. Municipalities
4. Producer cooperatives or informal groups of producers with a *fiduciary* agent
5. Community Health Center, hospitals, or other health care facilities
6. Mutual Aid networks
7. Faith based organizations
8. Senior Centers
9. For-profit and non-profit grocery stores, as well as food cooperatives
10. Small food retailers such as corner stores, convenience stores, farmers' markets, mobile food markets, or retail food outlets operated by an emergency food program or food hub. Applicants in this category must be engaged in the sale of nutritious and culturally relevant foods, including fresh fruits and vegetables.

Applicants must be located and operate in Connecticut and be in compliance with all applicable state and federal business requirements.

Project & Application Requirements

Project Requirements: The structure of projects eligible for funding must reflect the following requirements:

- 1) Projects cannot spend the full award within one growing season only. Purchases and distribution of CT Grown food and farm product must occur throughout the full duration of the program, August 1, 2022, through April 2024.
- 2) At least **80%** of farm products purchased must be grown in Connecticut (**CT Grown**). The **remaining 20%** may be sourced from up to 400 miles from the point of distribution per the USDA definition of local in the RFA. Value-added (pickles, jams, honey, maple syrup, etc.) minimally processed products (frozen and/or cut/chopped,) and prepared meals that are produced in CT and contain predominantly CT Grown ingredients are allowable.

- 3) At least **51% of project funds** must be spent on food purchases. This does not include transportation and food storage costs. Projects dedicating more than 51% of the budget on food will be prioritized.
- 4) Applicants are not required to procure food from multiple producers/vendors; however, projects procuring food and farm products from multiple producers/vendors will be prioritized.
- 5) Applicants must be willing to distribute multilingual outreach information that will be provided by CT DoAg on state and federal nutrition assistance programs to recipients of food procured through this program.
- 6) Target populations for distribution include any low-income food insecure household, citizen or non-citizen, who is at or below the federal poverty level or who is considered Asset Limited Income Constrained Employed (ALICE)

Awarding Priorities

In the evaluation process, applications that demonstrate that they will meet these priorities will receive a higher score.

- 1) Commitment to procure from Socially Disadvantaged Producers, small producers, and/or vendors. The higher the number of producers and total percentage of procurement funds that will be allocated to Socially Disadvantaged producers, the greater consideration will be provided.

Producers should self-identify if they are considered Socially Disadvantaged. Please note that awardees are encouraged to add on more producers throughout the lifetime of the project and assistance may be provided in making those connections.

- 2) Community organizations in a region that cooperatively apply for funding to create a more comprehensive project. However, there needs to be one primary applicant who will hold the agreement, as a project lead or fiduciary agent with CT DoAg. This lead entity shall be responsible for project administration and reporting.

Applications must include:

Required

1. Created application profile on Salesforce grant portal.
2. Completion of project narrative template (includes budget, budget justification, and workplan). This should be downloaded from the [Documents/Forms](#) tab on the LFPA webpage and uploaded to your application on Salesforce as an attachment.
3. Quotes/estimates as needed for supplies and services.

Recommended

1. Letter(s) of intent from community partners that you will work with to distribute the food if applicable. A template that may be used is available for download on the [Documents/Forms](#) tab on the LFPA webpage.

2. Documentation of interest from producers and/or vendors interested in selling product through your program. Please note that you are not limited to source from the producers/vendors who express interest and CT DoAg with other partners can provide additional resources to connect with producers/vendors. Documentation can come in the form of a letter or an email.

Expenses & Payment

The amount awarded to an applicant through the LFPA Grant shall be a minimum of \$100,000 and cannot exceed \$300,000 for a 20 month- award period. There is no match required for this grant.

Eligible expenses may include:

- 10% of total funds requested shall be permitted to go towards indirect.
- Technical Assistance (TA) for small and socially disadvantaged producers is an allowable cost if it directly relates to their participation in the LFPA project. Examples of TA are assistance scaling up production, with learning to grade/package product, and with proper food safety practices.
- Food storage and packaging costs are eligible expenses if they are part of distribution expenses. Rental of equipment (such as cooler/warehouse space, vehicles, etc.) are allowed during the lifetime of the grant.
- Supply costs for outreach and other needs related to this project.

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 or 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
- Food storage and infrastructure for producers.
- Purchase of vehicles outright, however vehicle modifications for distribution is allowed.

Payment will be made to applicants in using the following payment schedule:

- Advancement of 50% of project funds upon contract signing and approval of an advancement request.
- Advancement of 40% of project funds after proper documentation is approved from the first advancement and approval of a second advancement request.
- The remaining 10% of project funds will be reimbursed upon project completion and submission of final report. Please note that the burden of this remaining 10% must lie with the contract holder and cannot be at the expense of producers and/or vendors.

CT DoAg reserves the right to offer partial awards.

Submission Process

All LFPA Grant applications and attachments are required to be submitted through the agency's grant application portal. Applicants will need to create an account for the grant portal.

The grant portal can be accessed [here](#).

Instructions on how to apply for grants on the DoAg Grant Portal is located [here](#).

Applicants should consider applying well in advance of the grant deadline, as the Department 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 DoAg if there are accessibility concerns.

Evaluation Criteria and Process

The LFPA Grant is a competitive grant. Only complete applications, as outlined above and submitted timely, will be evaluated. The evaluation will be weighted heavily on the project explanation in the Grant Narrative as well as the awarding priorities listed above. Project applications should clearly present the impact of their project on the community.

All prospective purchases for the completion of the project must be accompanied by a quote or estimate. Projects that involve hiring a subcontractor must include quotes from the subcontractor. Purchases prior to a grant award cannot be included in a project for reimbursement.

CT DoAg will conduct an administrative review and applications will be evaluated by an industry review panel representative of the food supply chain. The review panel will make award recommendations to the Commissioner of Agriculture for a final decision.

Project Duration & Post Award Requirements

Projects must be **completed within 20 months** of contract execution. Final project reports are due 30 days prior to the end of the contract period.

Applicants of awarded projects will be responsible for the following

- Signing an agreement with the State of Connecticut,
- Providing a Certificate of Insurance holding the state listing the state as an additional insured on the grantee's liability insurance policy,
- Completing the contract within the contractual timeframe,
- Submitting a final project report including a sustainability plan in the required format per the executed contract,
- 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,
- Agreeing to a site inspection once the project is complete and prior to final payment being released (if applicable,)
- Other requirements as outlined in the State of Connecticut contract.
- Quarterly check-in calls with CT DoAg program manager,
- Participation in bi-yearly meetings with other grant awardees to share best practices and concerns, and

- Presentation of final project results and lessons learned to interested stakeholders at the conclusion of the project period.
- If awarded, the Contractor shall be required to follow food safety requirements, maintain or acquire proper insurances.

Awardees will be provided with templates and guidance to comply with all state and federal reporting requirements for this program which shall include but not be limited to:

- Quarterly submission of producers sourced from including business name, product type, quantity, price, and if the producer self-identifies as socially disadvantaged.
- Quarterly submission of distributions made including organization or community distributed to, and number of individuals served.
- Quarterly financial reports with paid invoices to producers and other receipts as necessary to CT DoAg program manager, templates and guidance will be provided.