



September 22, 2021

Grant-Writing Workshop: Food Security Infrastructure Grant

View the [Request for Responses \(RFR\)](#) for this round of FSIG. Apply before **October 31st at 11:59pm**. Draft your responses in a separate document so you have a copy of your application. If you applied for FSIG in the last round of funding, [request your score](#), regardless of whether you received the award or not (and get in the habit of doing this after each grant application!). Watch the [workshop recording](#) and share it widely. View the [website and background](#) of our expert grant-writer and presenter, Rose Wilson. Contact SEMAP with any questions: [shickey@semaponline.org](mailto:shickey@semaponline.org).

#### **BACKGROUND ON FSIG:**

- There is huge demand for this grant. FSIG in the past has fully and partially funded proposals, with only 25% of all applications last round having been funded at all
- Though farmers are highly encouraged to apply, past recipients were more often other parties in MA food system (ex. food pantries, school systems, etc.)
- Up to \$500,000 per project but only a small handful received close to this amount
- Previous round allowed multiple applications per business/organization – this round, only one application is allowed

#### **READING BETWEEN THE LINES ON THIS APPLICATION:**

- Requests over \$100,000 *should have a match* (can be in-kind, as in labor, but this should be well-documented – even if you don't take a regular salary, estimate this)
  - Match would strengthen applications under \$100,000, but is not necessary
- Capital infrastructure only
  - Must be *durable* equipment (ex. machinery to fill yogurt containers is eligible, but the yogurt containers themselves are not)
  - Must be new, *not used*
  - Land is *not* covered
  - Marketing is *not* covered
- Must provide quotes for *all* line items of the budget
  - Must know how you'll pay for your project *before you get the grant*, which is a reimbursement program – if this is through a bridge loan, get documentation
- Won't fund farmer or farmworker labor, but *will* fund contractor labor for eligible projects, as long as they are not regularly on your payroll and *licensed in Massachusetts*
- Attach quotes as a *single* PDF; attach additional materials as *single* PDF
- This isn't a COVID-response grant, so be careful about the ways in which you frame your project – “preparing for future disruptions,” “increase resilience of food system” are great phrases

#### **STRATEGY 1: Find opportunities for your project to directly align with funders' goals**

- FSIG goal is to (1) support MA access to local food, (2) support MA food equity, and (3) mitigate food distribution disruptions in MA, especially in marginalized populations
- We don't just want to know that you want a delivery van, we want to know that it will support local food access in underserved communities and *how*



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**STRATEGY 2: Pay attention to all the deadlines and contract dates**

- Because there is huge demand for FSIG, reviewers are looking for easy ways to remove applicants from consideration – projects that won't meet the deadlines are the first to go
- FSIG projects are expected to start by November 30, 2021 and must be completed by June 30, 2022
  - It may take them longer than expected to review applications, so the November 30th date is an estimation – work done or purchases made prior to actual contract start date is not eligible for reimbursement

**STRATEGY 3: Compartmentalize funding request as much as you can**

- As many funded projects won't receive the full requested amount, it's helpful to prove that you can still do something with partial funding
- This also prevents you from receiving partial funding and being unable to use it at all or make any progress on your project

**STRATEGY 4: Distilled to one sentence, your project should discuss the priorities of the grant (in the case of FSIG, food access/equity)**

- In the public record, projects are listed alongside one sentence, and those that get funded will discuss food security, access, and/or equity in MA communities
- This is the one line that state legislators see, so reviewers fund projects that prove that this grant was money well-spent and is worth funding again
- Should be the first sentence in your project description

**STRATEGY 5: Identify the keywords in the RFR and then use them in your application**

- Incorporating keywords and phrases in "Evaluation Criteria" section of RFR where they suit your project will make it easy for reviewers to see value of your project
- Ex. "resiliency," "alleviate immediate needs," "ensure stronger long-term access," "culturally relevant," etc.
- Don't be buzzword-y – you'll need to be specific about how your project will achieve these things, but using their own words strengthens your app

**STRATEGY 6: Highlight long-term impacts of this project on your business (ie. estimated sales increases) and on the food system (ie. expected market expansion, potential for collaboration or replication)**

- If you are a farm with a small gross income asking for the maximum amount, you'll need to demonstrate how this project will grow your business, gross income, and community presence
- Grant reviewers are investing in your business, and want to see that it may make you a more profitable or economically-sustainable business that will continue to serve marginalized communities AND/OR that it could be scaled/shared to support other businesses

**STRATEGY 7: Document and quantify as much as you can**



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- How many new households will this project help you reach? How many additional markets will you attend as a result of this project? Etc.
- Even if figures are rough estimates, they will help, so long as you document how you arrived at them
- If you're estimating business growth, letters of support from your customers & community will help

*Note for beginning farmers: Because you have no (or limited) historical records of servicing marginalized populations or any populations at all, you'll need more letters of support from community members, customers, lending institutions, etc.*

**Resources to Support Your Application:**

- Along with farmers serving BIPOC and low-income populations, those serving [Environmental Justice Communities](#) and any of our 26 [Gateway Cities](#) will be scored higher
- Specifically identify how your project will support goals of the [MA Local Food Action Plan](#)
- These organizations may be able to support you with a bridge loan: MA Food Trust, Farm Credit, Pioneer Valley Grows, your own regional bank
- Leverage relationships with your Buy Local organization – SEMAM is happy to write letters of support for farmers in Norfolk, Bristol, Plymouth counties, and our partners in other counties will do the same. Email [shickey@semaponline.org](mailto:shickey@semaponline.org) to discuss this or be connected with someone in your county.

Apply for [business assistance](#) from SEMAM for future grants, business planning, marketing strategizing, etc.