



# 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 early care and education settings.

**W**hether 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. For information and to learn if you are eligible to apply, visit the USDA Farm to School Program website: [www.fns.usda.gov/farmtoschool](http://www.fns.usda.gov/farmtoschool)

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

Numerous federal funding opportunities for local and regional food systems are organized under USDA's Know Your Farmer, Know Your Food Initiative. Check out the Know Your Farmer, Know Your Food Initiative website ([www.usda.gov/knowyourfarmer](http://www.usda.gov/knowyourfarmer)) 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 early care and education programs. Visit CDC's website to find contact information for your state's health department: [www.cdc.gov](http://www.cdc.gov)

Visit [www.grants.gov](http://www.grants.gov) to find all federal grant opportunities.



## How to promote healthy fundraising at your school:

### What's your policy?

Work with your school's wellness team or petition your administration to set a school or district policy supporting fundraisers that improve student and community wellness.

### Connect with Community

Engage your PTA/PTO, principal, coaches, school clubs, academic and athletic departments, booster clubs and food service in conversations about healthier fundraising options.

### Beyond Food Items

Good fundraisers can involve more than just food. Consider selling farm or food-related products like kitchenware, seeds, seasonal or local cookbooks, magnets or frames featuring students' artwork, garden stones or tiles, plants, flowers, bulbs, greeting cards with pressed flowers, herbs and spices.

### Promote Physical Activity

Promote physical activity and active living through healthy fundraisers. For example, host a bike, jog or hike-a-thon and encourage students to collect pledges for their performance.

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

## 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, additional reimbursements for school meals and more. To find out how your state supports farm to school, see the National Farm to School Network's *State Farm to School Legislative Survey* at [farmtoschool.org](http://farmtoschool.org).

## 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. RSF Social Finance is one example: [www.rsfsocialfinance.org](http://www.rsfsocialfinance.org). There are financial groups that fund projects based on their social impact and a founder's vision, initiative and ability to impact a community. Check out Ashoka Changemakers as an example: [www.changemakers.com](http://www.changemakers.com)

## 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 throughout your community and see what partnerships emerge!

## Fundraising/Awareness-Raising Events

Support your program and build local awareness of your work with 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

*\*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.*

