

Attachment A

Food Security Planning Grant Program Specifications

Funding Source	Up to \$1,500,000 - NJ Economic Recovery Act of 2020.
Administrating Agency	EDA
Program Purpose	<p>To advance the goals of the FDRA consistent with the uses of the economic planning services funds, staff propose utilizing up to \$1,500,000 of the funds under Section 127.d of P.L. 2020, c. 156 to create a competitive planning grant program that will focus on leveraging distressed assets in designated FDCs in New Jersey (approved by the Board in February 2022) and to improve food access and food security. The Food Security Planning Grant Program is the Authority’s first pilot program to fund development of plans to improve food access specifically within the newly designated FDCs. NJEDA can leverage the findings and outcomes from such local plans as a tool for developing and deploying future comprehensive food security initiatives and economic development across the state while equipping municipalities with the tools to think about how to repurpose distressed assets.</p> <p>Food access is not simply a health issue but also a community development issue. Many residents in low-income neighborhoods—rural, suburban, and urban—have limited access to fresh produce and other healthy foods. New Jersey faces a crisis of food insecurity that has only been exacerbated by the COVID-19 pandemic and its economic impacts on families across the state. A February 2022 survey by the U.S. Census Bureau found that nearly one in 11 New Jersey households reported not having enough to eat in the past seven days. Not having access to food, and more specifically nutritious food, has a direct impact on one’s health. For this reason, access to nutritious, affordable, and culturally relevant food is a key component not only in a healthy, sustainable local food system, but also in vibrant, growing communities and aligns with building a stronger and fairer New Jersey. The Food Security Planning Grant Program is one tool that NJEDA will deploy to empower local government entities and redevelopment agencies to develop and submit plans to improve food access while transforming distressed assets that have presented a hindrance to economic growth. Local plans have the potential to address community needs, develop a community-driven approach to improve food access and develop distressed assets to promote local economic development.</p>

	<p>The Food Security Planning Grant Program will support the development of an action plan leveraging distressed assets located in FDCs across New Jersey to improve food access and food security. Grants will be competitively awarded based on applications that meet all applicable eligibility criteria and achieve a minimum of 55 points based on the evaluation criteria set forth in the program specifications, subject to the availability of funding. If applications from eligible entities who meet the minimum requisite score exceed the amount of funding that is available, funding will be prioritized based on the highest scoring applications. There will be a limit of 1 grant award per qualifying Food Desert Community. However, in the event that there is still funding available after the above restriction is satisfied, the Authority may award the remaining funding to additional applications within an already funded FDC based on the overall score of the applications, until all funds have been exhausted or until all eligible applicants have received a grant.</p> <p>All applicants must submit a budget and budget justification with a 20% match which can include in-kind resources.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The requested level of funding must be broken down by line items and clearly illustrated in the budget narrative • The requested level of funding must be reasonable for proposed activities within the timeline • A 20% match of grant amount required – Match can be either financial, or in-kind resources with demonstrated value greater than or equal to 20% of the grant amount as determined by the Authority. <p>For the Food Security Planning Grant program, a distressed asset shall be defined as a commercial building or series of buildings, its attachments, and appurtenances; or vacant land that is fully or partially vacant for at least one year, that due to deteriorated condition or appearance of its exterior (because of deferred maintenance such as deteriorated paint or overgrown vegetation, boarded up door and/or windows), that can be leveraged to improve food access and food security.</p>
<p>Applicant Eligibility Requirements</p>	<p>Eligibility under the program will be limited to the following entities whose geographic catchment areas include an FDC.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • New Jersey municipal government, • County governments, and • Redevelopment agencies <p>While the applicant may serve or have offices in a broader geographic area, proposals must be for a distressed asset located within the borders of an FDC⁸.</p>

⁸ Most FDCs are not inclusive of the entire municipality, only parts of a municipality. Potential applicants can see if potential distressed assets are located within the boundaries of an FDC by viewing the FDC map at <https://njdca.maps.arcgis.com/apps/webappviewer/index.html?id=cd59d206f39c40a691d6ba38598134fb>

For the Food Security Planning Grant program, the proposed plan must be for an asset which meets the above-mentioned definition of a distressed asset, and the proposed plan must leverage a distressed asset within one of the 50 FDCs.

Along with their application, applicants must provide at least one letter of support from the Office of the Mayor or Chief Executive of the municipality where the asset is located and at least one stakeholder located within the boundaries of the FDC, detailed below in the 'Application' section. For a property owned by a New Jersey County, the applicant must provide a letter of support from the property owner or their designee for the proposed project; this must be signed by the Chief Executive of the government entity, independent agency or authority or their designee. For a property owned by a private individual or by a non-governmental for-profit or non-profit entity; the applicant is required to provide a letter of support signed by the owner, co-owner, corporate officer, or their designee. Proposals for directly owned New Jersey state land will not be considered. Eligible entities should have a tax clearance certificate from the New Jersey Division of Taxation or verification by the Authority from the Division of Taxation as to good standing as applicable.

A municipality, a county, or redevelopment agency may submit multiple applications in a lead role and can be included as a partner in additional applications where they play a non-lead role. A municipality, county, and redevelopment agency whose geographic catchment areas include an FDC can each submit a proposal but are encouraged to coordinate their applications.

To ensure that the Authority's resources can be utilized as widely as possible across New Jersey, the Authority intends to award a maximum of one grant per FDC. For example, if a municipality applies for a distressed asset in Municipality X FDC, and the county applies for a different distressed asset in Municipality X FDC, a maximum of one award will be made within that FDC. However, in the event that there is still funding available after the above restriction is satisfied, the Authority may award the remaining funding to additional applications within an already funded FDC based on the overall score of the applications, until all funds have been exhausted or until all eligible applicants have received a grant.

Awards will be made to applicants with the highest scores of all eligible applicants, with a minimum qualifying score of 55 points.

	<p>Grant amounts will range from \$75,000 and \$125,000 and will be determined based on the FDC’s composite factor score⁹ where the distressed asset is located:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Applicants with a distressed asset in an FDC with a Composite Food Desert Factor Score between 86.5 – 63.9 will be eligible to receive an award of \$125,000. • Applicants with a distressed asset in an FDC with a Composite Food Desert Factor Score between 61.2 – 51.5 will be eligible to receive an award of \$100,000. • Applicants with a distressed asset in an FDC with a Composite Food Desert Score between 51.2 -24.1 will be eligible to receive an award of \$75,000.
<p>Eligible Grant Uses</p>	<p>The Food Security Planning Grant Program will support the development of an action plan focused on improving food access and food security in newly designated FDCs across New Jersey by leveraging distressed assets. Applicants must have identified a distressed asset within the borders of a FDC to be eligible for this grant. All applicants must include plan for specific deliverables, which must be completed within 9 months after the effective date of the grant agreement between EDA and recipient.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Upon written request, Authority may authorize a three-month extension to the grant recipient’s deadline for plan completion. <p>All applicants must submit:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • An overview on potential viable uses of the distressed asset property in an FDC • A proposal to utilize the distressed assets to improve food access/security based on the community needs. • A detailed timeline of activities that must be completed along with resources needed to accomplish the proposed plan <p>The proposed plan may include but are not limited to strategies such as:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Identification and development of a community-based initiative/program or resource that improves access to affordable, fresh, and healthy produce and other food items 2. Determining cost-benefits of retrofitting, redeveloping or regreening the distressed asset as it relates to food access and food security 3. Developing a plan to drive economic growth for the

⁹ Composite factor scores included in list of FDC designations found at: <https://www.njeda.com/wp-content/uploads/2022/02/New-Jersey-Food-Desert-Community-Designation-Methodology-Final-2-9-22.pdf>

	<p>locality by implementing innovations around food access and food security solutions</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 4. Creating greater social, economic, and environmental sustainability by identifying ways to grow, process and sell fresh produce 5. Stakeholder engagement and facilitation to identify community desires and needs pertaining to food access and food security 6. The identification of appropriate additional funding sources to support community led re-use of one or more properties to support food access and food security 7. Feasibility study for a supermarket or food retailer
<p>Application Process</p>	<p>For each application, a lead applicant must be identified, who can only be a municipal government, county government, or a redevelopment agency, whose geographic catchment areas include an FDC. While the applicant may serve or have offices in a broader geographic area, proposals must be for a distressed asset located within the borders of an FDC. The lead applicant is the entity that is the sole recipient of grant funds and responsible for compliance with all terms of the grant agreement. The lead applicant will also serve as the primary point of contact with the Authority, submit any requests for fund disbursement, and be responsible for providing all required reports to the Authority.</p> <p>Applications will be accepted for a 60-day period from the date the application is opened to the public, which will be communicated to all potential applicants via the Authority’s website and social media accounts. Applications submitted after the application deadline will not be accepted or reviewed. EDA staff will be responsible for reviewing the application. After the application window closes, EDA anticipates notifying each applicant if the application has been deemed complete. Applicants whose applications have been deemed incomplete for failure to meet the application requirements will be given five business days to cure any deficiencies. If at the end of the five-day period, the applicant has not cured the deficiencies, their application will be deemed incomplete, and they will be declined by staff under the proposed delegation of authority for non-discretionary declines. Under delegated authority to the CEO and based on the CEO’s subdelegated authority, staff will approve projects for assistance and may decline applications that do not meet non-discretionary eligibility requirements.</p>
<p>Application Requirements</p>	<p>The Food Security Planning Grant Program is a competitive grant program. It is not first-come, first-served. Applications must be submitted within 60 days of the application’s release. To ensure competitiveness of grant, a minimum score of 55 points, out of a maximum total score of 100, will be required.</p>

Only applications scoring at least the minimum score will be considered for award. The proposed plan must leverage a distressed asset within one of the 50 FDCs.

All applicants must meet the following general requirements:

- All applicants must show clear alignment with the proposed work and have identified an asset that meets the definition of a distressed asset.
- Along with their application, applicants must provide one letter of support from the Office of the Mayor or Chief Executive of the municipality where the asset is located and at least one stakeholder located within the boundaries of the FDC.
- For a property owned by a New Jersey County, the applicant must provide a letter of support from the property owner or their designee for the proposed project; this must be signed by the Chief Executive of the government entity, independent agency or authority or their designee.
- For a property owned by a private individual or by a non-governmental for-profit or non-profit entity; the applicant is required to provide a letter of support signed by the owner, co-owner, corporate officer, or their designee.
- Proposals for directly owned New Jersey state land will not be considered.
- Eligible entities should have a tax clearance certificate from the New Jersey Division of Taxation or verification by the Authority from the Division of Taxation as to good standing as applicable.
- All applicants must submit a mid-term grant progress report. This will include, but is not limited to, a summary of activity related to planning and expenditure of funds.
- All applicants must submit a final plan and final report at the end of the grant period. The final report must provide summary of grant expenditure, project activities, results and impacts, lessons learned and potential next steps to leverage the distressed asset to address food security of residents with the FDC.
- Unless applicant seeks and is granted, a time extension for project completion, final report must be completed and submitted within 9-months from grant agreements.
- All applicants will be required to complete and submit an online application for consideration
- A 20% match of grant amount required – Match can be either financial, or in-kind resources with demonstrated value greater than or equal to 20% of the grant amount.

<p>Application and Scoring Criteria</p>	<p>Criteria # 1: Composite Food Desert Factor Score (5 to 10 points) – Points will be awarded based on the Composite Food Desert Factor Score where the distressed asset is located¹⁰.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Composite Food Desert Factor Score between 86.5 – 63.9 = 10 points • Composite Food Desert Factor Score between 61.2 - 51.5 = 7 points • Composite Food Desert Factor Score between 51.2 – 24.1 = 5 points <p>Applications that do not include one or more of the following sections will be disqualified and considered ineligible regardless of other materials provided.</p> <p>Criteria # 2: Plan Description/Specifications/Statement of Work (up to 20 points) – All applicants must provide a narrative outlining how they intend to use the distressed asset (as defined in the memo) to improve food access and food security. The proposed plan must leverage a distressed asset within one of the 50 FDCs. Statement of work must include, at minimum:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Must identify current food security needs and challenges in the FDC • Must identify opportunities for creating a viable and sustainable solution to address food access and food security in the community • Emphasis on long term viability and adaptability of a given concept • Identify and collaborate with other key stakeholders to create an inclusive plan <p>Criteria # 2 will be measured using the scale below:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 1 -10 points – Element is present/shows minimal efficacy towards goals/objectives attainment • 11 -15 points – Element is present/shows moderate efficacy towards goals/objectives attainment • 16 – 20 points – Element is present/shows superior efficacy towards goals/objectives attainment <p>Criteria # 3: Work Plan (up to 20 points) – Applications demonstrating the ability to seamlessly execute the proposed plan will be given preference.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Applicant must provide Specific Measurable Achievable Relevant Time-bound (SMART) objectives demonstrated clearly in the work plan with
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¹⁰ Composite factor scores included in list of FDC designations found at: <https://www.njeda.com/wp-content/uploads/2022/02/New-Jersey-Food-Desert-Community-Designation-Methodology-Final-2-9-22.pdf>

a timeline.

- Applicant must identify appropriate staff responsible for implementing each activity
- Applicant must describe goals/outcomes for each activity
- Clearly describe the length of time needed to implement each activity within the grant period

Criteria # 3 will be measured using the scale below:

- 1 -10 points – Element is present/shows minimal efficacy towards goals/objectives attainment
- 11 -15 points – Element is present/shows moderate efficacy towards goals/objectives attainment
- 16 – 20 points – Element is present/shows superior efficacy towards goals/objectives attainment

Criteria # 4: Organizational Capacity (up to 20 points) –

The applicant is equipped to successfully complete the proposed plan in a timely manner. Factors considered but are not limited to:

- Applicant has experience that demonstrates their ability to work effectively on a collaborative project with a state or a federal agency or on a multi-stakeholder project
Applicant must provide at least one example of working successfully within the FDC and with other collaborators
- Applicant must clearly state how this project aligns with and will impact their overall efforts to address the diverse food security and food access needs of people that live within the FDC they serve
- Applicant has experience that demonstrates their ability to work effectively on a collaborative project with a state or a federal agency and/or on a multi-stakeholder project

Criteria # 4 will be measured using the scale below:

- 1 -10 points – Element is present/shows minimal efficacy towards goals/objectives attainment
- 11 -15 points – Element is present/shows moderate efficacy towards goals/objectives attainment
- 16 – 20 points – Element is present/shows superior efficacy towards goals/objectives attainment

Criteria # 5: Community Engagement (up to 20 points) –

Applicants must demonstrate a track record of:

- Partnership and engagement with various stakeholders across different sectors to address community needs. This can be demonstrated through letters of support