

New Jersey Economic Development Authority (NJEDA)

Food Security Planning Grant Program

NOTICE OF FUNDING AVAILABILITY

The New Jersey Economic Development Authority (NJEDA or Authority) hereby announces the availability of grant funding under the Food Security Planning Grant Program, with the purpose to serve as a pilot program to explore the potential for improving food access and food security in New Jersey's designated Food Desert Communities (FDCs) by leveraging distressed assets.

The pilot planning grant program makes up to \$1,500,000 available to competitively award grants up to \$125,000 to municipal governments, county governments, and/or redevelopment agencies whose geographic catchment areas include an FDC.

Applications will open on *September 27, 2022, at 10:00 am*. Applications will be accepted for sixty calendar days after the opening of the application. Applications for this program will be accepted up to the closing date, *November 25, 2022, at 5:00 pm*. Applications will be evaluated for completeness and scored by a committee of Authority staff. The highest scoring applications will be approved by the Chief Executive Officer of the NJEDA for funding.

A non-refundable fee of \$1,000 shall accompany every application. An application fee waiver may be requested at the time of application for proposals led by municipalities or municipal authorities, boards, commissions, or other municipal entities ranked in the top 10 percent of the Municipal Revitalization Index (MRI).

The application can be accessed at <https://www.njeda.com/food-security-planning-grant/>.

Purpose

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.

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), can be leveraged to improve food access and food security.

Overview

This funding opportunity is issued as part of Governor Phil Murphy's campaign to build a stronger and fairer New Jersey by investing in communities and to improve food access and food security for all Garden State residents. The Food Security Planning Grant program will fund development of plans that improve food access and food security in the FDCs by leveraging distressed assets.

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 creating vibrant communities and building a stronger and fairer New Jersey. The Food Security Planning Grant Program is one tool that NJEDA will deploy to empower local governments and redevelopment agencies to develop and submit plans to improve food access while transforming distressed assets that have presented a hindrance to economic growth.

The Food Security Planning Grant funding allocated in the Fiscal Year 2022 Appropriations Act was assigned to the Economic Recovery Fund to create this planning grant program.

Eligibility

Eligibility under the program will be limited to the following entities whose geographic catchment areas include an FDC:

- New Jersey municipal governments,
- County governments, and
- Redevelopment agencies.

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.¹

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 a letter of support from the office of the mayor or chief executive of the municipality where the asset is located and at least one letter of support from a stakeholder located within the boundaries of the FDC.

For a property owned by a New Jersey County, municipal government entity, independent agency, or authority, 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.

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

¹ 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>

municipality, county, and redevelopment agency whose geographic catchment areas include an FDC may each submit a proposal focused on the same FDC but are strongly encouraged to coordinate and submit a single application.

Eligible Uses

The Food Security Planning Grant Program will support the development of action plans 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.

The proposed plan may include but are not limited to strategies such as:

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 locality by implementing innovations around food access and food security solutions.
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.

Grant Amounts

The Food Security Planning Grant Program is a competitive grant program. Grant amounts will range from \$75,000 to \$125,000 and will be determined based on the Composite Food Desert Factor Score² for the FDC where the distressed asset is located:

- 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.

Application Process

Online 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

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

social media accounts. Applications submitted after the application deadline will not be accepted or reviewed.

To apply, an applicant must register or log into the online application portal, complete all required application questions fully, and upload all required PDF document attachments. After the close of the application period, EDA staff will review all applications for completeness and respond with any necessary rectifications to the application. The applicant will have five business days to cure any deficiencies, or the application will be withdrawn. Applications deemed complete will be scored by a committee of EDA staff. Applications must meet a minimum score of 55 to be recommended for grant funding.

Each application must contain the following documents:

A. Required Application Information

1. A full completed online application.
2. Religious Activities questionnaire, if applicable.
3. Signed Letter of Support from the Office of the Mayor or chief executive of the municipality where the asset is located.
4. Signed Letter of Support from at least one stakeholder located within the boundaries of the FDC.
5. Signed Letter of Support from the property owner of the distressed asset:
 - a. For a property owned by a New Jersey County, municipal government entity, independent agency, or authority, 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.
 - b. 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.
6. Completed Legal Questionnaire.
7. Application Fee or Fee Waiver Request.

B. Required Proposal Component of Application

1. Distressed Asset Description.
2. Plan Description/Specification/Statement of work
 - a) Must identify current food security need and challenges in the FDC.
 - b) Must identify opportunities for creating a viable and sustainable solution to improve food access and food security in the community.
 - c) Must include emphasis on long term viability and adaptability of a given concept.
 - d) Must identify and collaborate with other key stakeholders to create an inclusive plan.
3. Workplan
 - a) Must provide Specific Measurable Achievable Relevant Time-bound (SMART) objectives in the work plan with a timeline.
 - b) Must identify appropriate staff responsible for implementing each activity.
 - c) Must describe goals/outcomes for each activity.
 - d) Must clearly describe the timeline needed to implement each activity within the grant period.
4. Organizational Capacity

- a) Demonstrate their ability to work effectively on a collaborative project with a state or federal agency or on a multi-stakeholder project.
 - b) Must provide at least one example of working successfully within the FDC and with other collaborators.
 - c) Must clearly state how this project aligns with and will impact applicant's overall efforts to address the diverse food security and food access needs within the FDC they serve.
5. Community Engagement
- a) Must demonstrate partnership and engagement with various stakeholders across different sectors to address community needs. This will be supported by a letter of support from community stakeholders.
 - b) Must demonstrate prior experience working with community members, stakeholders, and/or advocates in addressing food insecurity.
 - c) Must demonstrate efforts to ensure programs are built to promote social and economic equity.
 - d) Must be able to consider and mitigate any past difficulties that created challenges for the asset selected.
 - e) Should demonstrate experience in community redevelopment with focus on equitable redevelopment projects, community focused adaptive reuse or innovative food distribution concepts.
6. Budget and Budget Justification
- a) Requested level of funding must be broken down line-by-line and its uses clearly illustrated in the budget narrative.
 - b) Requested level of funding must be reasonable for proposed activities within the timeline.
 - c) The 20 percent match requirement must be included.

Applications deemed complete will be scored by a committee of EDA staff. Applications that meet a minimum score of 55 points to be considered for an award.

Food Security Planning Grant is a competitive grant program. Applications will be evaluated and scored based on the following scoring criteria:

1. Location of the distressed asset in the FDC (5 – 10 points).
2. Plan description stating impact of the proposed plan on the distressed asset and the FDC (up to 20 points).
3. Work plan that describes the project's purpose and merits, which must address the specific needs or the FDC as it relates to improved food access and food security (up to 20 points).
4. Organizational capacity of the applicant entity to successfully complete the project with meaningful outcome (up to 20 points).
5. Community engagement (up to 20 points).
6. Budget (up to 10 points).

Fees

A non-refundable fee of \$1,000 shall accompany every application.

An application fee waiver may be requested at the time of application for proposals led by municipalities or municipal authorities, boards, commissions, or other municipal entities ranked in the top 10 percent of the Municipal Revitalization Index (MRI). Applicants will self-identify in the application as a municipality or municipal government entity requesting a waiver. Staff will determine if the entity meets the criteria for a waiver. Eligible entities will be granted a waiver for the program. Ineligible entities will be notified and a cure in the form of fee payment will be requested to complete the application.

Additional Information

Comprehensive information on Food Desert Community Designation is available [here](#).

Comprehensive information about the Food Security Planning Grant program is available [here](#).

