

Healthy Food Financing Initiative Food Access and Retail Expansion Fund (HFFI FARE Fund)

2026 Grants and Technical Assistance RFA Webinar
Wednesday, May 27, 2026 | 2:30 PM ET



Meet the HFFI Team



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Presentation Overview

- HFFI Overview
- 2026 RFA Eligibility & Timelines
- Submitting a Funding Inquiry
- Submitting a Grant Application
- Submitting a TA Application
- Community Connectors

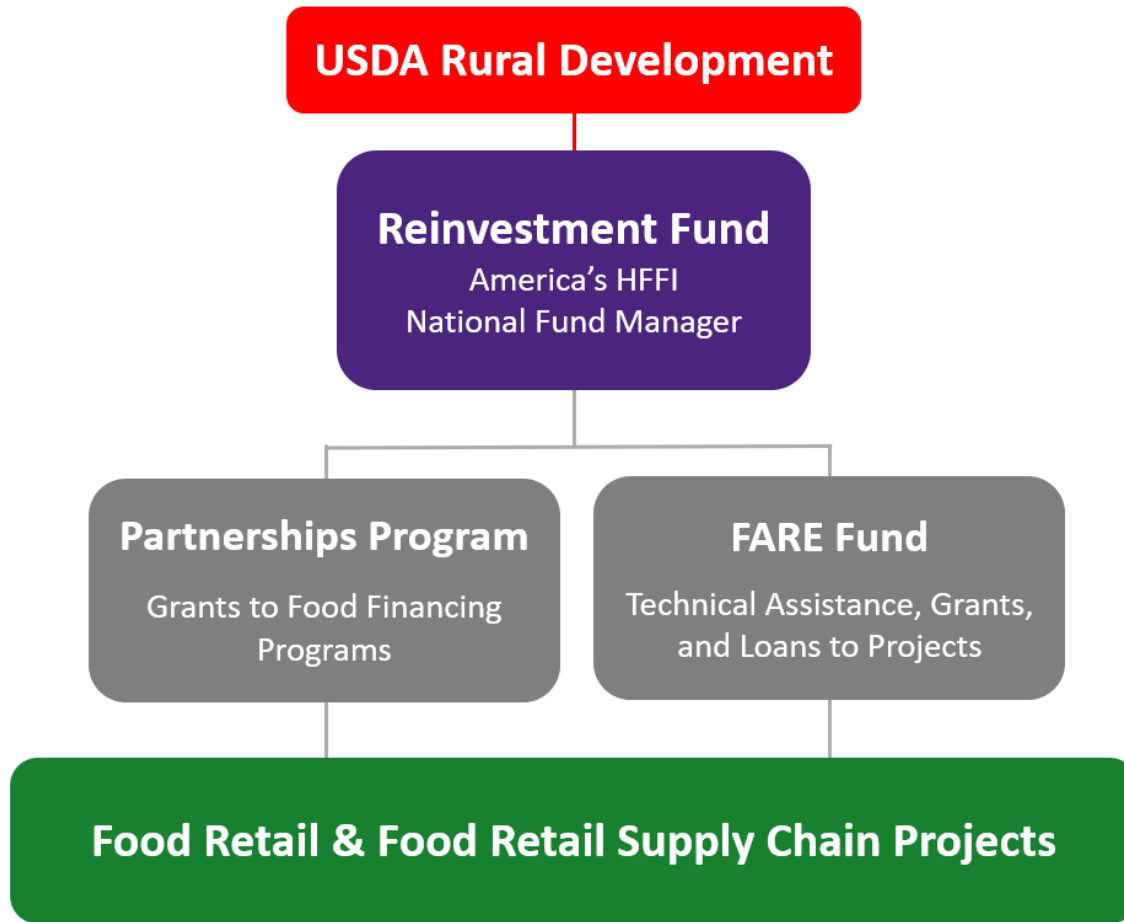
Healthy Food Financing Initiative

The purpose of the Healthy Food Financing Initiative (HFFI) is to improve access to healthy foods in underserved areas, support food supply chain resiliency, to create and preserve quality jobs, and to revitalize low-income communities.

HFFI Goals and Authority

- The Healthy Food Financing Initiative (HFFI) was authorized under the Agriculture Act of 2014 and reauthorized in 2018.
- HFFI is a program of USDA Rural Development.
- In 2017, Reinvestment Fund was selected as the National Fund Manager through a competitive process. We implement HFFI and provide financial and technical assistance to eligible healthy food retail partnerships and projects. Reinvestment Fund manages the HFFI program for USDA.
- Funding for this announcement is made available largely through the American Rescue Plan Act (ARPA) of 2021.

HFFI Program Management



Over the next few years, the HFFI FARE Fund will provide \$60 million in loans, grants and technical assistance to food retail and food retail supply chain projects in underserved areas.

Assistance from the HFFI FARE Fund helps healthy food retailers and enterprises to overcome higher costs and initial barriers to entry, thus enabling food enterprises to thrive and deliver fresh, healthy, and affordable products.

For more information on America's HFFI visit <https://www.investinginfood.com>

2026 RFA Eligibility & Timelines

2026 HFFI FARE Fund – Grants & TA

- 1 round of funding for Grants & TA
- At least \$5 million available for **Grants** between \$20,000-\$250,000 per project
 - For a range of planning and implementation soft/hard costs
- At least \$1 million available for **Technical Assistance (TA)** up to \$75,000 per project
 - For contractual soft costs to be paid by Reinvestment Fund directly to a third-party consultant for predevelopment and business assistance activities
- One-time investments of capital into projects creating or expanding food retail or post-harvest food retail supply chain enterprise business models that will serve eligible underserved areas
- Applicants may apply for both TA and Grant funding, but will not be selected for more than one award



Eligible Applicant Types

- for-profit businesses
- cooperatively-owned businesses
- tax-exempt nonprofit corporations
- institutions of higher education
- state and local governments and governmental agencies, authorities, commissions, and food policy councils
- tribal governments and tribal governmental agencies, authorities and food policy councils

Individuals are not eligible to apply

Eligible Projects

What we will fund:

- Projects planning or implementing business models that will contribute to food access through the availability of Staple and Perishable Foods for retail sale at SNAP retailers in underserved areas
 - *Food retail business models* (e.g. a grocery store) that sell an assortment of staple (at least 3 categories) and perishable foods directly to consumers, accept SNAP benefits, and operate in an eligible underserved area
 - *Post-harvest food supply chain business models* (e.g. food hub) that will contribute to the retail food supply chain through processing, aggregation or distribution to downstream SNAP Authorized food retail outlets operating in eligible underserved areas
- Projects that will maintain or improve food supply chain resilience



Ineligible Projects & Use of Funds

What we will not fund:

- Agriculture
- Institutional Sales
- Charitable food
- Nutrition education
- Restaurants & prepared foods
- Beverages, snacks, & Consumer Packaged Goods
- Institutional Kitchens and Entrepreneur Incubators
- Research
- Loan funds/regranting programs
- Food retail programs & initiatives conducting consulting, TA or educational activities
- Motor Vehicles
- Multiple Locations and Business Models

USDA Food Research Atlas Low Income Low Access Census Tract

OR

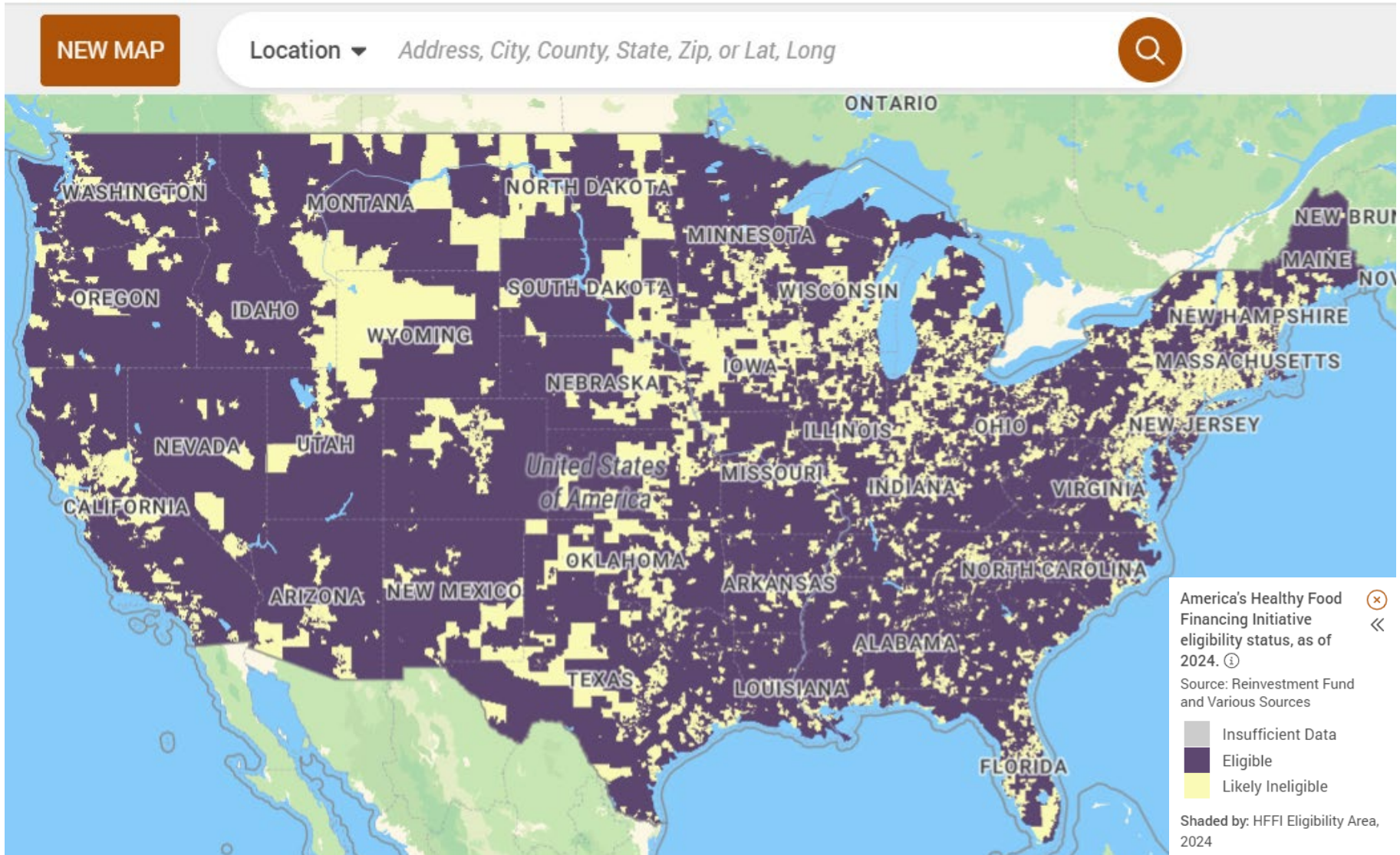
Census tract adjacent to USDA Food Research Atlas Low Income Low Access Census Tract with a median family income less than or equal to 120 percent of the applicable area median

OR

Geographic unit determined to have limited access to supermarkets or grocery stores by a methodology that has been adopted for use by another government or philanthropic healthy food initiative

Eligible Locations & Mapping Tool

www.investinginfood.com/eligibility



Application Process

This Grant and TA RFA will have a two-phased application process for each funding opportunity. The first step is submitting a Funding Inquiry. Eligible Funding Inquiries will then be invited to submit a full application via email from noreply@smartsimple.com.

	Grants & TA
Funding Inquiry Form Submission Deadline	11:59 PM ET on July 31, 2026
Funding Inquiry Eligibility Determination Notification	By September 4, 2026
Application Submission Deadline (if eligible)	11:59 PM ET on October 30, 2026
Award Notification*	No earlier than January 2027

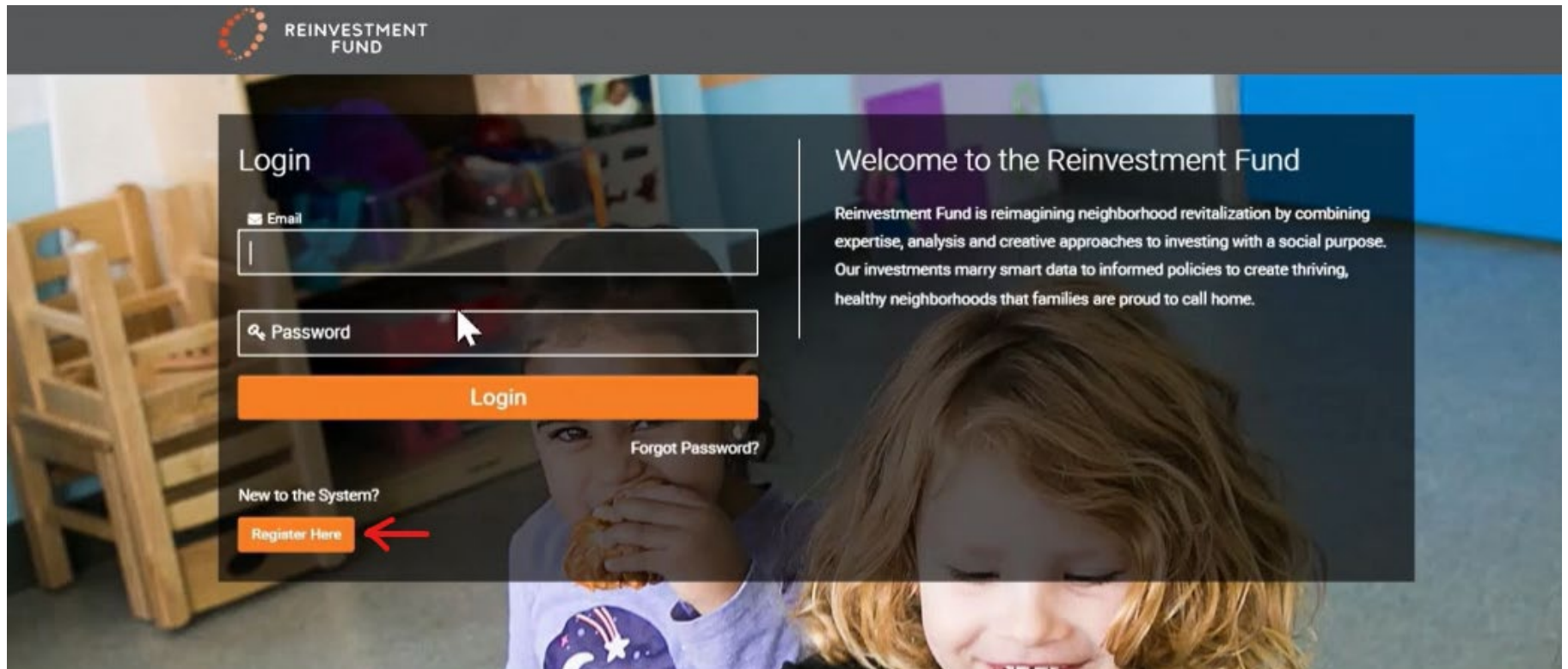
Program staff will be available to answer questions regarding Funding Inquiry and Application submissions until 5 PM ET on the day before each associated deadline above. We encourage early submission!



Submitting a Funding Inquiry

SmartSimple – Online Application Portal

Funding Inquiries Applications must be submitted through Reinvestment Fund's SmartSimple grants portal https://reinvestmentfund.smartsimple.com/s_Login.jsp



The screenshot shows the login page for the Reinvestment Fund's SmartSimple grants portal. The page features a dark header with the Reinvestment Fund logo and name. Below the header is a large image of two children, one eating a cookie. Overlaid on this image is a dark grey login form. The form includes a 'Login' title, an 'Email' input field, a 'Password' input field with a magnifying glass icon, an orange 'Login' button, a 'Forgot Password?' link, and a 'New to the System?' section with a 'Register Here' button. A red arrow points to the 'Register Here' button. To the right of the login form is a white text box with a 'Welcome to the Reinvestment Fund' heading and a paragraph of text.

REINVESTMENT FUND

Login

Email

Password

Login

Forgot Password?

New to the System?

Register Here

Welcome to the Reinvestment Fund

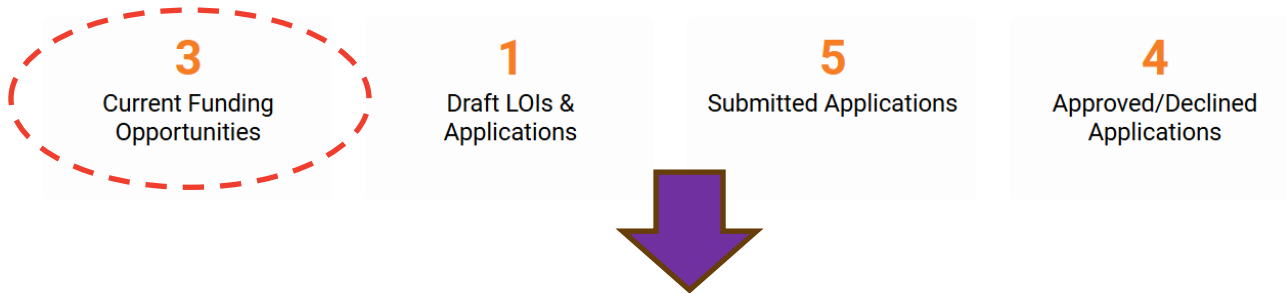
Reinvestment Fund is reimagining neighborhood revitalization by combining expertise, analysis and creative approaches to investing with a social purpose. Our investments marry smart data to informed policies to create thriving, healthy neighborhoods that families are proud to call home.

SmartSimple – Online Application Portal

Applications will be submitted through Reinvestment Fund’s SmartSimple grants portal https://reinvestmentfund.smartsimple.com/s_Login.jsp

Welcome Test Organization_Olivia - Funding Opportunities & Applications

For technical support, please contact us at smartsimple.support@reinvestment.com.



Current Funding Opportunities

Search bar with 'x' and 'Q' icons, and pagination '1-3 of 3' with navigation arrows.

Opportunity Details	Description
HFFI Food Access & Retail Expansion Fund Deadline: 2026-07-31 23:59 Submit HFFI FARE Fund Inquiry Form	The HFFI Food Access and Retail Expansion Fund (HFFI FARE Fund) will provide grants and technical assistance to eligible projects serving underserved areas through healthy food retail. Funding is designed to be a one-time investment of capital into predevelopment or implementation activities that will support the development and success of a sustainable business model.

SmartSimple – Funding Inquiry

New Submission



PDF View

SUMMARY APPLICANT INFORMATION PROJECT ELIGIBILITY AND OVERVIEW PROJECT INFORMATION

Reinvestment Fund, in its capacity as National Fund Manager for the Healthy Food Financing Initiative at USDA Rural Business-Cooperative Service, requests Grant and Technical Assistance applications for America's Healthy Food Financing Initiative Food Access and Retail Expansion Fund (HFFI FARE Fund) for the 2026 funding cycle. For the 2026 funding cycle, at least \$5,250,000 is available for planning and implementation Grants and at least \$1,000,000 is available for Technical Assistance.

Submission of an HFFI FARE Fund Inquiry Form is the first step in the application process and is required for all potential applicants to express interest in Technical Assistance and Grant funding from the HFFI FARE Fund. Eligible Funding Inquiries will be invited to submit a full application.

To be considered for a Grant or Technical Assistance, Funding Inquiry Forms must be received by July 31, 2026 by 11:59 PM Eastern Time. Funding Inquiry Forms submitted after this deadline will not be accepted. After this date, interested applicants must wait to apply during a future RFA cycle. Funding Inquiry Forms submitted outside of the SmartSimple online grants portal will not be accepted. Before submitting an Inquiry Form, please review the eligibility criteria for this funding cycle in the 2026 Technical Assistance and Grant Request for Applications (RFA) available at <https://www.investinginfood.com/fare-fund-2026/>.

The HFFI FARE Fund will only accept one eligible Funding Inquiry per entity or project for this RFA. Entities who submit a Funding Inquiry may apply for both Grant and Technical Assistance funding, but will only be selected for one type of award.

Applicants will be contacted via noreply@smartsimple.com with an eligibility determination by September 4, 2026 once their Funding Inquiry Form has been reviewed. If eligible, applicants will also receive an invitation to submit a full application. Questions about the RFA, Inquiry Form, or this online grants submission portal should be direct to help@investinginfood.com.

NEXT >

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Funding Inquiry Requirements

Applicant Requirements

- Legal entity name and contact information
- Applicant verification information including, IRS documentation of the legal status of the organization
- Proof of Active SAM Registration & UEI

Funding Inquiry Questions

- Eligibility Criteria, including staple & perishable food assortment, SNAP authorization, and location information
- Project Description
- Proposed Business Model Information
- Organization background
- Community Served & Need
- Funding Request(s) & Proposed Use of Funds

Funding Inquiry Reminders

- Projects can apply for both funding types but will only be selected for one award. Please only submit one Funding Inquiry per project or entity.
- Inquiry forms that are overall considered eligible and invited to submit an application will receive feedback indicating components of their project that are ineligible/unallowable. This information should be addressed when completing the full application.
- Applicants that do not provide adequate information in their Funding Inquiry may be declined eligibility for the HFFI FARE Fund.
- If a Funding Inquiry is submitted without active SAM Registration, the submission will be determined to be ineligible and declined.
- Notifications regarding the status of submitted Funding Inquiries will be sent out to the contact associated with the submission's SmartSimple account, via noreply@smartsimple.com

Submitting a Grant Application

Eligible Uses of Funds – Grants

What we will fund:

Funds can be used for planning and implementation hard and soft costs including:

- Late-stage planning and predevelopment activities such as appraisals, architectural or design assistance, or other contractual or consulting uses
- Brick and mortar facility development, machinery and equipment*
- Technology and software
- Other one-time soft costs such as community engagement, staff training, and marketing and merchandising needs
- Operational and pilot costs (no more than 25% of the total proposed project budget). Projects that solely request grant funds for operational or pilot costs, or request grant funds for more than 25% of allowable operational and pilot costs, will be considered ineligible.

**Using Federal grant funds for real property, equipment, and materials/supplies with a lifespan more than one year and a per-unit cost of \$10,000 or more will result in a Federal Interest in your property.*

See [2 CFR 200.310-316](#) for more information.

Application Requirements – Grants

Application Narrative

- Organization Overview & Background
- Population, Community, and/or Market Served
- HFFI Project Objectives, Activities, and Outcomes
- Business Model Description
- Need for and Use of Funds
- Business Model Sustainability & Leveraged Resource
- Activities Completed to Date
- Project Impacts
- Priorities (optional)
- Project Timeline

Budget (up to \$250,000)

- Break down by cost categories
- Explanation of requested uses

Attachments

- Operating Projections
- Sources and Uses
- Demographic Questions (optional)
- Attestations

Full applications are invitation only.

Review Scoring Criteria – Grants

- Eligible applications will be scored by reviewers based on the criteria in the RFA (105 total points)
- These criteria include:
 - A. Applicant Qualifications (0 to 10 points)
 - B. Stakeholder Involvement (0 to 10 points)
 - C. SNAP Authorized Retail Outlets in Underserved Areas (0 to 20 points)
 - D. Staple and Perishable Foods in the Retail Supply Chain (0 to 20 points)
 - E. Project Activities and Business Model Viability (0 to 20 points)
 - F. Identified Metrics (0 to 5 points)
 - G. Budget (0 to 10 points)
 - H. Timeline (0 to 10 points)

Review Priority Points – Grants

Up to 27 additional Priority Points will be give to projects with business models that:

- Are located in and/or serve Very Low-Income Communities (as defined earlier in this RFA) (4 points).
- Will create or retain Quality Jobs for low-income residents in the community (2 points).
- Support regional food systems and locally grown foods to the maximum extent possible (2 points)
- Are accessible by public transit (in areas that are served by public transit) (2 points).
- Will involve women-owned or controlled businesses. Applications submitted by women owned business will receive more points (up to 3 points).
- Will involve Black, Indigenous, and People of Color (BIPOC)-owned or controlled businesses. Applications that are submitted by BIPOC owned or controlled business will receive more points (3 points).

Review Priority Points – Grants (cont).

- Projects located in and/or serve Rural Areas (4 points).
- Organizations who are applying for financial assistance as part of a larger project and have secured funding from other sources, including other federal agencies. Matching contributions or cost-sharing is not required for awarded funds. However, the ability of an applicant to demonstrate that a grant award will serve to leverage other sources of capital, including other local, state, or federal government resources, private sources of equity or debt, will be considered (2 points).
- Projects in communities that have been underserved by HFFI investment, including other national, state, and/or local HFFI programs (5 points).

Federal Award Requirements – Grants

- If awarded, the performance for grants is up to 12 months if no construction and up to 24 months with construction.
- Grantees will be required to submit performance progress and financial reports semi-annually during the project period and, as applicable, after grant closeout.
- This is a federal grant award & grantees must remain in compliance with all applicable laws, regulations, etc.
- Some of those include:
 - Federal Financial Management and Internal Controls Requirements
 - Program Income
 - Procurement and Property Standards
 - Cost Principles
 - Audits
 - Record Retention and Access

Submitting a Technical Assistance Application

Eligible Uses of Funds – TA

What we will fund:

Contractual soft costs to be paid by Reinvestment Fund directly to a third-party consultant for early-stage predevelopment and planning activities including:

- business model development,
- project planning,
- market studies,
- business planning,
- financial modeling,
- appraisals,
- community engagement,
- technology development,
- community development and food systems/access,
- business and retail management,
- project management,
- leadership development/management training,
- financial management,
- governance and organizational structure,
- community engagement and outreach, and
- legal support

Application Requirements – Technical Assistance

Application Narrative

- Project Parameters
- Project Summary
- Business Model Description
- Organization Overview & Background
- Population, Community, and/or Market Served
- Community Engagement & Involvement
- Contractual Use of Funds & Project Objectives
- Project Outcomes
- Capital Access & Project Sustainability
- Project Timeline
- Priorities

Budget (up to \$75,000)

- Break down by contractual service providers

A list of potential TA providers is available at

<https://www.investinginfood.com/ta-providers/>.

Attachments

- Sources and Uses (if applicable)
- TA Consultant letter of Commitment or Service Quote (if applicable)
- Demographic Questions (optional)

Full applications are invitation only.

Review Scoring Criteria - Technical Assistance

- TA selections will be made at the discretion of Reinvestment Fund and will take into account the merits of the project based on the criteria below, the project type, geographic diversity (including states, urban and rural), program diversity, ability to advance the HFFI goals, and allowable costs.
 - Project Team
 - Stakeholder Involvement
 - Food Access Goals
 - Proposed TA Activities
 - Budget & Timeline
 - Priority Areas

Technical Assistance Administration

- Technical Assistance will be administered as non-financial assistance through a third-party service provider. Reinvestment Fund will directly contract with the agreed-upon provider(s) who will conduct approved contractual services up to a 12-month period. A list of potential TA providers is available at <https://www.investinginfood.com/ta-providers/>
- Technical Assistance recipient reporting requirements may include, but are not limited to:
 - Reporting of TA project progress and use of TA funds during the TA period.
 - Final closeout report when the TA project is completed.
 - Ongoing reporting after the project closeout, including brief general project updates.

Grant & TA Application Reminders

- If a full application submission has significantly changed from the inquiry form submission and includes the addition of significant unallowable costs and activities, the application may be determined to be ineligible and not scored.
- Notifications regarding the status of submitted application will be sent out to the contact associated the submissions SmartSimple account, via noreply@smartsimple.com
- Award decisions will be announced no earlier than January 2027.

Community Connectors

HFFI Community Connectors are available to assist potential applicants with understanding the RFA, Funding Inquiry submission process, and more.

Take the Community Connector's screening quiz which includes a few high-level eligibility questions to ask yourself before reaching out to the Community Connectors for support or submitting a Funding Inquiry: <https://bit.ly/fare-2026>

An official eligibility determination will be made following submission of a Funding Inquiry in SmartSimple and review by Program Staff.

After completing the quiz, reach out to our Community Connectors at CommunityConnector@investinginfood.com for additional support. Please include your 'ORGANIZATION NAME and STATE' in the subject line.





To download the full 2026 Grant & TA RFA and apply online visit: www.investinginfood.com/fare-fund-2026

**Funding Inquiries are due Friday, July 31, 2026
by 11:59 PM ET.**

**If invited to submit, full Grant & TA
applications will be due Friday, October 30,
2026 by 11:59 PM.**

Program staff will be available to answer questions regarding Funding Inquiry and Application submissions until 5 PM ET on the day before each associated deadline above. We encourage early submission!

Contact Us

Program RFA & Info:
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