America's HEALTHY FOOD FINANCING INITIATIVE
REINVESTMENT FUND

HFFI 2026 FARE Fund
(Food Access and Retail Expansion Fund)
Grants & Technical Assistance (TA)
Frequently Asked Questions

Updated 7.17.2026
Please note, this FAQ may be updated periodically with additional questions and resources.

I. General Program Information & Funding Availability

Where can I find the 2026 FARE Fund Grant and TA Request for Applications (RFA)?

The full RFA is available for download at https://www.investinginfood.com/fare-fund-2026/.

Is this program in Grants.gov?

No, you cannot apply for this program using grants.gov. Funding Inquiry forms and Applications must be submitted through Reinvestment Fund's online grants portal, SmartSimple (**https://reinvestmentfund.smartsimple.com/).** To be considered for grant or TA through this 2026 RFA you must submit a Funding Inquiry form by 11:59 PM Eastern Time on July 31, 2026. Funding Inquiries will be reviewed for eligibility and notification of Funding Inquiry determinations will be sent out by September 4, 2026. If eligible, full applications will be due by 11:59 PM on October 30, 2026.

Applications received by email, mail, or fax will not be reviewed. Please contact us if you have any issues with the online submission process. To avoid technical issues, we encourage you to submit your application in advance of application deadlines.

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.

If I submitted a Funding Inquiry to the 2024-2025 HFFI FARE Fund RFA, do I need to submit a new one for this 2026 Grant and TA RFA?

Funding Inquiry submissions from the 2024-2025 RFA are not being reviewed for this 2026 Grant & TA RFA. In order to be considered for the 2026 Grant & TA RFA, you must submit a new Funding Inquiry.

If I submitted a full Grant or TA application to the 2024-2025 HFFI FARE Fund RFA, do I need to submit a new application for this 2026 Grant and TA RFA?

Funding Inquiry submissions from the 2024-2025 RFA are not being reviewed for this 2026 Grant & TA RFA. In order to be considered for the 2026 Grant & TA RFA, you must submit a new Funding Inquiry.

I want to copy some material from my 2024-2025 Funding Inquiry or application submission to use for my 2026 submission – how can I access my 2024-2025 submission?

To view your Funding Inquiry submission:

1. Log into the SmartSimple account associated with your 2024-2025 RFA Submissions at reinvestmentfund.smartsimple.com
2. In the first row of tiles on the home page, select "Approved/Declined Applications"
3. Click the orange "Open" button on your HFFI Food Access & Retail Expansion Fund Funding Inquiry with an application ID that begins with 2024 or 2025.

To view your full application submission:

1. Log into the SmartSimple account associated with your 2024-2025 RFA Submissions at reinvestmentfund.smartsimple.com
2. In the third row of tiles on the home page under *Completed Follow-Up Forms* select "Submitted Forms"
3. Click the orange "Open" button on your HFFI Food Access & Retail Expansion Fund application with an application ID that begins with 2024 or 2025.

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How can I get my questions about the application answered or get help using the online grants portal?

Please direct individual questions by email to help@investinginfood.com. Please include your specific questions in the email so Reinvestment Fund staff may assist you. Reinvestment Fund strongly encourages applicants to submit early to avoid technical issues with the grant portal.

Where can I find examples of projects that have been previously funded through America's HFFI?

Information on projects previously funded through America's HFFI is available at www.investinginfood.com/impact.

Will the FARE Fund be offered again next year?

Most likely. FARE Fund is intended to be a five year funding program between 2024 and 2028. Fare Fund is Federally funded, so there is always a chance that the Federal funding environment will change and Reinvestment Fund won't be able to provide intended future funding. There may be multiple RFAs released under the FARE Fund. For this 2026 RFA, there will be one round of grants and Technical Assistance.

Can I apply for HFFI FARE Fund Loans through this RFA?

You cannot apply for loans through this 2026 Grant and TA RFA. A new HFFI FARE Fund Loan RFA for 2026 – 2028 is available here: https://www.investinginfood.com/fare-fund-loans-2026/

How does this program differ from other programs called HFFI?

To date, multiple federal, state, and local governments and philanthropies have supported healthy food financing policies and initiatives. There are many programs that use the name HFFI.

These include previous funding through U.S. Department of Health and Human Services' Community Economic Development (CED) Program and current funding through U.S. Department of the Treasury's Community Development Financial Institutions (CDFI) Fund, as well as many state and local programs.

The 2014 Farm Bill created this Healthy Food Financing Initiative within USDA, to be administered by a CDFI. This program, called America's Healthy Food Financing Initiative, is managed by Reinvestment Fund, and provides financial and technical assistance, either directly or through other partners and intermediaries, to eligible fresh, healthy food retailers and food retail supply chain enterprises.

Are matching funds required?

No, they are not required. This grant cannot be used to match funds with other Federal Grants, but your project can have external funds to support the activities. You will indicate this during the application.

Can this grant be used in conjunction with other USDA grants or external funding?

Yes, HFFI awards can be used for expenses that are a part of larger projects that include other federal and non-federal funding sources. If selected for an award, HFFI funding may not be allocated to expenses already being covered by other sources.

Can these funds be used as a match for other federal grant applications?

No, HFFI funds may not be used as a match for other federal awards.

What are the requirements for SAM registration?

Because HFFI is funded federally, applicants are required to register with the System for Award Management (SAM) at sam.gov and keep the sam.gov registration open until the application process is complete. If an applicant is selected to receive a grant award, SAM registration must be active throughout the life of the award.

You can register with SAM at https://sam.gov/SAM/. SAM is an official website of the U.S. government. There is no cost to use SAM. For more information and assistance with using SAM, please review the HELP page at: https://sam.gov/content/help and/or contact SAM directly.

Applicants must have active SAM Registration at the point of Funding Inquiry submission to be considered eligible. If a Funding Inquiry is submitted without active SAM Registration, the submission will be determined to be ineligible and declined.

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We have a UEI but have not completed the full "entity registration," do we need to do so?

Yes, to be invited to submit a full application & awarded funding, an applicant must be legally incorporated, have a UEI number and active SAM Registration. <u>If a Funding Inquiry is submitted without meeting these criteria, the submission will be determined to be ineligible and declined.</u>

Do organizations need to be formally incorporated to apply? Can I apply using a fiscal sponsor?

Yes, organizations must be legally incorporated and must provide documentation of their legal status to apply. To be awarded a grant, an applicant must be legally incorporated, have an EIN/TIN and a UEI number, as well as an active SAM registration. If an applicant doesn't have an EIN/TIN, they may apply through a partner or a fiscal sponsor.

If awarded a grant, the organization that will sign the grant agreement should be the applicant in SmartSimple. The Applicant Information and Attestations/Supplemental Questions should also be completed on behalf of the incorporated entity that is being awarded. You should only answer questions in the context of the organization who will be completing the project in the narrative questions of the Funding Inquiry/application.

Does being a previous recipient of HFFI Funds guarantee that I will be awarded future HFFI grants, technical assistance or loans for my project, or does it make my project ineligible for additional funding?

Receipt of a previous HFFI award does not guarantee an organization's selection for future HFFI grant, technical assistance or loan funding. If you have previously received HFFI funding, you should describe in your submission how additional funding would move your project forward.

<u>Please note that organizations and projects that received an HFFI FARE Fund Implementation Grant through the 2024-2025 RFA will not be eligible for grant awards through this 2026 Grant & TA RFA. However, organizations and projects that received an HFFI FARE Fund Implementation Grant through the 2024-2025 RFA may apply for Technical Assistance funding.</u>

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How many Funding Inquiries can I submit to this 2026 Grant & TA RFA?

The HFFI FARE Fund will only accept one Funding Inquiry per entity or project for this RFA. Entities should not submit more than one Funding Inquiry before the July 31, 2026 deadline.

Will all submitted applications be scored?

Only grant applications will be competitively scored. However, all submitted Funding Inquiries will be screened for eligibility by program staff. Technical Assistance awards will be evaluated based on a merit and ability to meet the goals of HFFI

Can I submit letters of support?

For this RFA, Letters of Support should not be submitted for grant applications. For Technical Assistance, if applicable, applicants can attach a one-page letter of commitment and/or quote from their preferred TA provider(s) detailing the cost and scope of requested services. If you will be working with Reinvestment Fund to determine the best provider, you do not need to submit these.

Is it better to partner or submit as an individual entity, even if we might partner later in the project?

Applicants are encouraged to seek and create partnerships with public or private, nonprofit or for-profit entities, and/or other appropriate professionals, community-based organizations, and local government entities. Only the applicant must meet the eligibility requirements. Project partners and collaborators need not meet the eligibility requirements. Award recipients may subaward to organizations not eligible to apply if these organizations are necessary for the successful completion of the project.

Please keep in mind that if selected for funding, the entity that will be responsible for managing award funds should be the applying entity.

What is the turnaround time for receiving an update on my Funding Inquiry submission?

Funding Inquiries submitted by the July 31, 2026 deadline will be reviewed for eligibility and notification of Funding Inquiry determinations will be sent out by

September 4, 2026. If eligible, full applications will be due by 11:59 PM on October 30, 2026.

If I am invited to submit a full application, what is the turnaround time for receiving an update?

Application determination notifications will go out no earlier than January 2027.

Can you help me apply for SNAP authorization?

General questions about SNAP and EBT should be directed to Ask USDA via https://ask.usda.gov/s/contactsupport. Reinvestment Fund cannot assist with SNAP applications or answer questions about the SNAP authorization process.

Do these funds prompt Davis Bacon requirements?

No, awards under this program do not call for Davis Bacon requirements.

How do we find out if there has been prior HFFI funding in our community?

Previous awardees of America's HFFI can be found on our website at https://www.investinginfood.com/impact/. Additionally, the Healthy Food Access portal has a public map of HFFI efforts by state: https://healthyfoodaccess.org/view-hffi-efforts-by-state/. Please note that there may be other local HFFI efforts not reflected on this map.

Where can I get specific questions answered about my project?

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 only 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.

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Are organizations able to use their previous SmartSimple account portal?

Yes, if you have previously submitted an application to Reinvestment Fund for your organization using SmartSimple, you can use that same account to access the 2026 Grant & TA HFFI Funding Inquiry form.

II. Eligibility

What is an underserved area?

The term "underserved area" is defined by Section 6015 of the 2008 Farm Bill, as a community (including an urban or rural community and an Indian tribal community) that has: limited access to affordable, healthy foods, including fresh fruits and vegetables, in grocery retail stores or farmer-to-consumer direct markets; and a high rate of hunger or food insecurity or a high poverty rate. For the purposes of the FARE Fund, a project must be located:

1. In a Census tract determined to be a Low-Income and Low-Supermarket-Access Census Tract by the United States Department of Agriculture in its Food Access Research Atlas;
2. OR in a Census tract adjacent to a Census tract determined to be a Low-Income and Low-Supermarket-Access Census Tracts by the United States Department of Agriculture in its Food Access Research Atlas; and which has a median family income less than or equal to 120 percent of the applicable Area Median Family Income;
3. A US Territory
4. OR in a Geographic Unit as defined in 12CFR Part 1805.201(b)(3)(ii)(B), which meets the criteria as having low access to supermarkets or grocery stores through a methodology that has been adopted for use by another government or philanthropic healthy food initiative.

More information, including data and maps available to help determine if a proposed location is eligible in an eligible underserved area, is available at https://www.investinginfood.com/eligibility/.

If your project's location is listed as ineligible per the online map, the Funding Inquiry provides space to submit a government or philanthropic food access report. This report must outline how the specific retail site(s) are in low-income areas with limited access to healthy food retail options.

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What are staple or perishable foods?

Defined by USDA, Staple Foods means unprepared basic dietary items including breads, cereals, fruits, vegetables, meat, poultry, fish, and dairy products. Staple foods are generally considered to be basic items of food that make up a significant portion of an individual's diet and are usually prepared at home and consumed as a major component of a meal. Staple foods do not include fresh, frozen, or heated prepared foods. Staple foods also do not include accessory food products which are generally considered to be food items consumed as snacks or desserts, as well as food items that complement or supplement meals, such as most beverages and spices.

Perishable Foods mean Staple Foods that are fresh, refrigerated, or frozen. More information about Staple and Perishable Foods is available at https://www.fns.usda.gov/snap/retailer/staple foods.

What is the difference between a food retail outlet and a food enterprise?

Food retail outlets (also referred to as *food retailers*) sell an assortment of Staple and Perishable Foods directly to consumers and accept benefits under the Supplemental Nutrition Assistance (SNAP) Program. Examples of Food Retailers are grocery stores and mobile markets.

Food Enterprises (also referred to as *post-harvest food supply chain enterprises*) are entities along the post-harvest food retail supply chain such as food hubs, food distributors, processors, and manufacturers that directly contribute to the availability of Staple and Perishable Foods at downstream Food Retail Outlets. Food Enterprises do not necessarily involve the direct sale of food to consumers.

Some businesses may be both a food retail outlet and a food enterprise. For example:

- A meat processing facility that distributes meat products to other retailers, while also running a small SNAP authorized grocery story
- A food hub that aggregates produce from local producers for distribution to wholesale retailer buyers and also operates a SNAP authorized mobile market that sells grocery items directly to consumers.

Do food retailers need to sell both staple and perishable foods to be eligible?

To be considered eligible, projects involving food retail business models must offer a substantial assortment of Staple and Perishable foods for consumer sale, including at least three of the following Staple Food Categories: (a) fruits or vegetables; (b) meat, poultry, or fish; (c) dairy products; (d) breads or cereals.

Do food enterprises need to distribute both staple and perishable foods to be considered eligible?

No, but food enterprise projects that will only involve one or a few kinds of Staple Foods in their business model will need to describe how increased access to those food items will meet an existing unmet need of the community at existing SNAP authorized food retailers. Food Enterprise projects must speak to the product mix and estimated quantities of Staple and Perishable Foods that their business model would distribute to downstream SNAP authorized Retail Outlets as a result of the proposed HFFI project.

Are food enterprise projects involving business models that will not be physically located in an eligible underserved area, but will distribute staple and perishable foods to SNAP authorized food retailers in underserved areas, eligible?

If the business model is only food enterprise and will not be participating in direct-to-consumer sales, it does not physically need to be located in an underserved area but must distribute to SNAP authorized food retailers in eligible underserved areas. In other words, the retail location/points of sale involved in the applicant's project must meet HFFI location eligibility for the project to be considered for funding. In the Funding Inquiry, the applicant will need to provide the location of both the food enterprise site **and** the addresses of the SNAP authorized Retail Outlets that the business model will distribute to.

In the case that business model will operate as both a food enterprise and food retailer that participates in direct-to-consumer sales, the project's retail site must be physically located in an eligible underserved area and accept SNAP.

Are food banks, food shelves, or food pantries eligible?

No, food pantries and other charitable or free food distribution programs are not eligible for HFFI funding. Organizations that engage in charitable food donation are eligible to apply as long as funds will be used to support a market distribution-based food access project and otherwise meet the eligibility requirements described in the RFA. For example, if a pantry that donates food for free is expanding their business model to include a mobile market where food will be sold for retail sale, it may be considered eligible as long as the retail project meets HFFI eligibility criteria,

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including accepting SNAP, and the use of funds outlined in the Funding Inquiry are for expenses related to the retail portion only.

Please refer to the eligibility section of the RFA for more details on eligible applicants and projects.

If we are a nonprofit, and give food away for free, are we able to apply, or is it retail only?

Food pantries and other charitable or free food distribution programs are not eligible for HFFI funding. To be eligible, retail projects must sell food and accept SNAP. Organizations that engage in charitable food donation are eligible to apply as long as funds are used to support a market distribution-based food access project and meet the eligibility requirements described in the RFA.

Are projects in urban areas eligible?

Yes, projects in urban and rural areas are eligible if they are located in an eligible underserved area. You can look up the eligibility of your location using the mapping tool available on our website: https://www.investinginfood.com/eligibility/

Can a retail store that also sells prepared food apply for this program?

The goal of HFFI is to increase, expand, or sustain consumer access to an assortment of staple and perishable foods at SNAP authorized retailers in underserved areas. An assortment of staple and perishable foods means a variety of fresh, frozen and refrigerated basic dietary items (i.e. bread, produce, meat), and does not include hot or prepared foods. Projects funded through this program must align with this goal.

Food retailers that will sell both staple and perishable foods as well as prepared foods are able to apply for this program. Projects proposing the use of grant funds for expenses that directly involve creating or expanding prepared food production (i.e. commercial kitchen construction, meat processing equipment purchases) may potentially be considered eligible if the prepared food activities are directly tied to the retail business model's operation, are necessary for the overall sustainability of the business, and will ultimately support the business's ability to sell an assortment of staple and perishable foods in underserved communities.

Are restaurants eligible?

HFFI funds cannot support projects that are primarily focused on the sale of prepared hot, cold, or frozen meals, beverages, or snacks, including those provided in a restaurant or takeaway setting to consumers.

Are community gardens eligible?

HFFI funds cannot be used for pre-harvest agricultural production, including food production, gardening, farming, ranching, hydroponics, aquaponics, vertical farms, or other agricultural activities.

Are food retail programs or initiatives eligible?

Applications seeking funding for projects involving the creation or administration of food financing, technical assistance, consulting or educational programs and initiatives that are primarily focused on efforts like supporting retailers or food enterprises, coordinating among them, or offering services to them will not be considered eligible. To be considered eligible, applications must propose planning and implementation activities for a project that will support healthy food access in underserved communities through the creation or expansion of a distinct food retail or food retail supply chain business model.

Are mobile markets or farmers markets eligible to apply?

Mobile markets, farmers markets, and other non-traditional retail models are considered retail models within this funding opportunity and are therefore eligible business models. These operations must accept or plan to accept SNAP, offer the required assortment of staple and perishable foods, and operate in an eligible underserved area. For more information on SNAP food retailer stocking requirements, please visit https://www.fns.usda.gov/snap/retailer.

Can start-up businesses apply?

Yes, new food enterprises, new retail stores and other kinds of start-up projects are eligible for funding. This program will specifically support planning and predevelopment activities for new or expanded business models.

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Are Puerto Rico and US territories considered eligible locations?

Yes, Puerto Rico and other US territories are considered eligible underserved areas in this RFA.

If a supply chain organization is at an earlier stage and wants to apply for planning/pre-development, what kind of information or evidence will they need to provide?

Food retail supply chain projects will need to describe how the planning and implementation of the business model will substantially contribute to the retail food supply chain and downstream retailers, ultimately improving access to an assortment of staple and perishable foods at downstream, SNAP food retailers in eligible underserved areas. You will need to describe your existing or plans to establish relationships with SNAP food retailers in eligible underserved areas.

Would the expansion of an existing business be considered a "new" project?

Yes, funds may be used for the expansion of an existing business model, if the expanded business model is necessary to expand, preserve or sustain access to an assortment of staple and perishable foods in an underserved community it is already serving, or it will serve new underserved populations that are not already serviced by the existing business. As a reminder, all projects involving retail sales must be located in an eligible underserved area, and only up to 25% of the total grant request may be used for operational costs.

If my project involves a business model that will sell directly to consumers, can we sell only one kind of staple food (i.e. produce) that is SNAP eligible?

No - to be considered eligible, food retail projects involving business models that participate in direct-to-consumer retail sales must offer a substantial assortment of Staple and Perishable foods for consumer sale, including at least three of the following Staple Food Categories: (a) fruits or vegetables; (b) meat, poultry, or fish; (c) dairy products; (d) breads or cereals. More information about Staple and Perishable Foods is available at https://www.fns.usda.gov/snap/retailer/staple foods.

If the map says, "Likely Ineligible," are we able to present information that justifies why the region should be considered eligible?

Yes. Applicants may submit evidence that the location is determined to have limited access to grocery stores by a measure that has been adopted by another government entity (such as a city or state) or a philanthropic healthy food initiative.

If the supply chain (aggregator) project sells to institutional buyers who serve underserved clients, does that qualify as retail?

No, HFFI FARE Fund does not support institutional distribution. Food retail supply chain projects must focus on distribution to SNAP authorized retailers in order to be considered eligible for the HFFI FARE Fund. Entities that participate in institutional distribution may apply to the program, but the specific project for which they are seeking funding must primarily be focused on the distribution of staple and perishable foods to retailers.

Can food retail business models that will also accept WIC be considered eligible?

Yes, although WIC authorization is not a requirement. All food retail business funded through HFFI MUST be SNAP authorized.

Do you need to be SNAP authorized before submitting an inquiry form?

If a food retail project does not have SNAP authorization at the time of submitting a Funding Inquiry, they may still be considered eligible if they will obtain SNAP authorization once the HFFI funded business model is operating. If SNAP authorization is not obtained or is denied, then the grant may be terminated or recaptured.

We closed out an HFFI grant within the last 12 months. Can we apply again?

Organizations and projects that received an HFFI FARE Fund Implementation Grant through the 2024-2025 RFA will not be eligible for grant awards through this 2026 RFA. Organizations and projects that received an HFFI FARE Fund Implementation Grant through the 2024-2025 RFA may apply for Technical Assistance funding. Besides this, there are no other restrictions for this RFA regarding past HFFI recipients.

If you are a past HFFI recipient applying to this 2026 RFA, your FARE fund application should be for a unique "HFFI project," since HFFI funds should be for one-time

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projects that support a sustainable business model going forward. In other words, you may not use an additional HFFI award for costs that were covered by a previous award.

If our site is located in an area that is "likely ineligible" on the eligibility map, is there anything else we can submit to be considered eligible, and when should we submit the required documentation?

If your project location appears as "likely ineligible" on the eligibility map, you may submit evidence that the location is determined to have limited access to grocery stores by a measure that has been adopted by another government entity (such as a city or state) or a philanthropic healthy food initiative.. This information must be submitted with your Funding Inquiry in the relevant fields.

For US territories, you do not need to submit additional documentation as all US territories are considered eligible underserved areas under this RFA.

III. Grants and Technical Assistance

Can I submit a Funding Inquiry for both TA and a Grant?

You may submit a Funding Inquiry requesting both Grant and Technical Assistance funding. If you are invited to submit both a Grant and TA application, your organization will only be selected for one type of award. You should only submit a single Funding Inquiry indicating your request to apply to both TA and a grant. The HFFI FARE Fund will only accept one eligible Funding Inquiry per entity or project for this RFA.

When can the timeline for my proposed project begin?

The timeline for your proposed project should begin no earlier than January 2027. It can begin as late as 120 days after award notifications are sent out, which happen no earlier than January 2027.

TA projects may take up to 12 months. Grant projects where HFFI funds are not being used for construction may take up to 12 months. Grant projects that include construction (real property improvements) in their HFFI use of funds may take up to 24 months.

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Do I have to wait for the grant award/agreement to expend any funds that would be reimbursed under the grant?

Following award notification, if your organization is selected for funding, you will submit required award conditions and HFFI staff will work with you to finalize your project workplan and budget for allowable activities and expenses prior to executing your grant agreement. If selected for an award, award conditions must be met within 60 days of award notification, and the proposed project must start within 120 days of award notification.

In total, you can expect that the onboarding process (beginning with award notification to grant agreement execution) will take 1 – 3 months, depending on HFFI staff capacity and your organization's turnaround time for submitting required information.

Organizations may begin incurring expenses for the grant award during this onboarding period for project activities beginning as early as January 2027, but all costs incurred before the grant agreement is fully executed are at the recipient's risk; you will not be able to submit requests for disbursement of HFFI funds until the grant agreement is fully executed. HFFI is not required to reimburse such costs if for any reason the recipient does not receive a grant award or if the award is less than anticipated and inadequate to cover such costs.

Are technology and software expenses an eligible use of funds?

For grant awards, software and technology expenses (i.e. website development or retail management software) that are necessary to support the planning or implementation of an eligible business model will generally be considered eligible project expenses.

TA may only be used for early-stage planning, predevelopment, and business assistance provided by third party service providers. Technology and software expenses may be considered allowable if they are part of the scope of work of the service provider.

Are vehicle purchases permitted if they are needed for the project implementation?

For the 2026 RFA, HFFI funds may not be used for the acquisition/purchase of vehicles for operations of a business. Funds may be used for vehicle rentals necessary for travel to specific project planning and implementation related activities. Expenses related to pilot or operational activities may not be more than 25% of the total requested budget.

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Can funding be used to make value added products to sell at a market?

This program will not support the startup, operation, or expansion of enterprises that produce only one or only a few consumer-packaged goods, such as food items (e.g. granola bars, soup, etc.) for sale at a retail location.

For grants, expenses related to pilot or operational activities of an eligible food retail or post-harvest food supply project may be requested at no more than 25% of the total requested budget. For example, a new food hub that will lightly process fresh produce for distribution to SNAP authorized retailers in eligible underserved areas may apply for equipment and consulting costs necessary to begin operations. While 75% of their requested budget is for the costs of equipment and consultants, 25% of their total request budget may also include the cost of staff necessary to pilot the food hub operations. For TA, awards may not be used for operational or pilot costs.

Can funding be used for discount or voucher programs for customers?

An HFFI FARE Fund grant could be used for the cost of incentives, such as stipends or gift cards, related to community engagement for the planning or implementation of a new or expanded business model. Grant awards may, under certain circumstances, be used for discounts for community engagement participants if the cost of the discounts will be incurred by the grantee during the grant period. HFFI funds may not be used for discounts or vouchers such as Double Up Bucks, produce match, or other similar programs. TA awards may not be used for incentives and discounts.

Can funding be used to purchase inventory?

For grants, expenses related to pilot or operational activities of an eligible food retail or post-harvest food supply project may be requested at no more than 25% of the total requested budget. This includes expenses such as start up inventory.

TA awards may not be used for inventory or other operational costs.

Can funding be used for marketing costs?

Marketing costs related to the prelaunch planning and implementation of a new or expanded food retail or food supply chain business model are eligible. Up to 25% of grant budgets may be used for operational costs, which could include post-launch marketing costs.

Under no circumstances should HFFI grantees engage in any activities intended to persuade or recruit individuals to apply for SNAP benefits. The use of HFFI funds to employ personnel tasked with enrolling individuals in SNAP is strictly prohibited. Allowable promotional activities must be limited to factual statements and HFFI grantees should generally avoid emotional appeals in their promotional activities.

Can funding be used for personnel costs?

Grant funds may be used for personnel costs related to the prelaunch planning and implementation of a new or expanded food retail or food supply chain business model are eligible. Up to 25% of grant budgets may be used for operational costs, which could include post-launch personnel costs. As a reminder, since this is a federal award, grantees must have a systems for tracking and reporting actual personnel time the project.

HFFI funds cannot be used to engage in any activities intended to persuade or recruit individuals to apply for SNAP benefits. The use of HFFI funds to employ personnel tasked with enrolling individuals in SNAP is also prohibited. Allowable promotional activities must be limited to factual statements and HFFI grantees should generally avoid emotional appeals in their promotional activities.

Will grant feedback be given for both grant applications and technical assistance applications?

Grant applications will be competitively scored using the criteria outlined in the RFA, and reviewer feedback will be provided to all applicants who are not selected for funding. TA awards will not be scored by reviewers, and feedback will not be available for applicants.

How will grant applications be scored?

Reinvestment Fund's HFFI Review Panel of internal and external experts will base scores only on the information provided in the application. This is a competitive program, so you will receive scores based on the quality of the information provided. There are 105 total points available for the criteria, and 27 available additional points for the priority areas listed in the RFA. Each application will be scored by at least two reviewers, and the scores will be averaged. The full grant scoring criteria is listed in Part VIII of the RFA.

How do fund disbursements work for grant awards?

Once the award onboarding process is complete and the grant agreement is fully executed, Grantees may access grant funds throughout the grant cycle by submitting disbursement requests through the SmartSimple portal. Reimbursement is the preferred disbursement method, but exceptions may be made for advances. Grantees are required to provide invoices or quotes for all advances, and proof of payment for all purchases made with HFFI grant funds. An onboarding webinar will be held for selected awardees with more information about this process.

What are the TA award options?

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. Applicants are required to vet providers' capabilities and experience themselves for their specific project. If an applicant wants to work with a provider not on this list, they will need to connect the provider to Reinvestment Fund for vendor due diligence and onboarding, and the provider will be approved at Reinvestment Fund's discretion. If an applicant does not yet have a TA provider identified, if chosen to receive TA they will work with Reinvestment Fund to determine the best provider.