

Farmers Market Sustainability Grant – Fiscal Year 2025
Frequently Asked Questions - Updated: 10/07/2024

Questions from 9/6/24 Webinar:

Q: When will award notifications happen (roughly)?

A: The estimated notification and award date is in December 2024.

Q: Will the presentation be made available with the live links?

A: Yes, you can access the recording and presentation [here](#).

Q: Can markets not yet up and running be eligible for funding through this grant? We're planning for next year.

A: Yes. However, all activities funded through this grant must be completed by June 30, 2025. Documentation you will need to submit with your application include your market's rules and list of market vendors.

Q: Is this presentation only available as part of the recording or can we ask for the paper copy sent to us?

A: The slides will be sent to webinar registrants and posted to the website [here](#). A printed version of the presentation can be mailed by request. Email David Webber at David.Webber@mass.gov to request a copy.

Q: I'm curious why there's so little lead time. When many farmers markets don't open until spring, but the monies must be spent by June, which is not even mid-season?

A: The state fiscal year runs from July 1 to June 30 of each year. All projects, and work funded with the grant, must be complete by June 30, 2025, which is the last day of the state's fiscal year. Once the budget was approved for fiscal year 25, MDAR worked diligently to get the RFR posted as quickly as possible.

Q: We have one market in operation and are planning to add more markets in the future, should I apply through the farmers market or through our non-profit organization?

A: There is a maximum award of \$10,000 per applicant whether that is for one or more farmers markets the organization operates. Applicants may only submit a single proposal.

Additional Questions:

Q: We received funding in 2024. Are we eligible in 2025?

A: Yes, however organizations who did not receive funding in 2024 will receive priority scoring in the evaluation process (an additional 3 points).

Q: Are mobile farmers markets eligible to apply?

A: All applicants must meet the eligibility requirements outlined in Section 1A of the [RFR](#) - Eligible Applicants. Eligibility includes Massachusetts Farmers Markets as defined by MDAR's [Policy for Massachusetts Farmers Markets](#). The key components of the policy are listed below. To determine if a farmers market is eligible, review the complete policy before responding to the [RFR](#). Some mobile markets don't meet the first bullet point, so that can be a factor for mobile market eligibility in general.

Minimum qualifications for a Massachusetts Farmers Market:

- Two or more farmers, or their employees, volunteers, or representatives, who are present at all times during the operation of the farmers' market and who are selling products of which a majority are grown, produced, or raised by the farmer at their agricultural operation within the Commonwealth.
- The market has set hours of operation and operates on a regular schedule.
- The products are clearly labeled as to origin.
- The market complies with all applicable local, state, and federal laws and regulations.
- The market must have, and abide by, a set of rules* that governs the operation of the market and, at a minimum, assures the primary purpose of a Massachusetts Farmers' Market as providing a direct marketing opportunity for Massachusetts farmers, foresters and fisheries and addresses the following:
 - o Terms and conditions of sales, including pricing and labeling
 - o Vendor eligibility and product source
 - o Compliance by all vendors with local, state, and federal laws and regulations.

MDAR strongly suggests that farmers markets have a written grievance procedure and address market and vendor liability, including any insurance requirements in their policies or rules. * Rules must be approved by MDAR if the market is applying for or receiving MDAR sponsored grant funds or intending to include the sale of wine by farm wineries at the market. However, all farmers markets are expected to have rules that meet these minimum qualifications.

Q: The Market is moving to a market management platform, most likely Marketspread. Would the yearly cost of the platform fall within the parameters of the grant, possibly under long-term planning?

A: The purpose of the grant is to enhance Massachusetts farmers markets through strategic planning, promotion, marketing, consumer education, and infrastructure improvements. While market management platforms are eligible project categories, reviewers will need to understand how this project will enhance the sustainability of the market and meet the goals of the Farmers Market Sustainability Grant Program.

Q: Would the support included in the Buy Local grant preclude us from applying/receiving this grant?

A: You are not precluded from submitting an application for both grant programs given you meet the eligibility requirements and are not looking to fund the same projects.

Q. Can you please provide types of grant projects that were previously awarded? It would be helpful to us to see how other local markets have successfully applied for and used the MDAR grant funds in previous years.

A. Fiscal Year 24 was the first year for the program. Awarded grants supported a variety of projects including: developing consumer outreach plans; marketing campaigns; print and social media advertising, expanding community engagement and outreach; website upgrades and redesign; upgrades to market infrastructure, including tents, tables, supplies, storage and SNAP processing equipment; promotional materials; volunteer training; market ambassadors; market events like chef demonstrations; translation devices and signage including banners and yard signs.

Q. Can you please give examples of types of "Staff/personnel" referenced in "Staff/personnel costs to administer a funded project of this grant."

A. Allowable staff/personnel costs include expenses to administer a funded project. For example, an organization is awarded grant funds to develop and administer a marketing and outreach campaign. The time for staff to develop and administer the campaign is an allowable cost. Staff time unrelated to the marketing and outreach campaign would be unallowable.

Q. The Market is exploring an application for the FY25 Farmers Market Sustainability Program which would likely include some board development and community outreach including focus groups with our vendors, community attendees and Food Access Partners. We're also considering development of our Standard Operating Procedures manual for market managers which will require steering committee review and input. With these kinds of gatherings, we would want to offer light refreshments or a modest pizza / salad dinner depending on time of day. Is food an allowable expense?

A. Yes that is an allowable expense.

Q. Would food fall under the "Supplies/Materials" Category? (Mass Farmers Market has info indicating that food is part of Indirect.) We want to be sure it can be a stand-alone expense before we submit.

A. Food (as part of a meeting expense) should be included in the "Other" Budget category.

Q. Curious if the parameters have changed for the economic area. We did not obtain the grant for this fiscal year due to the fact that we were outside of it.

A. Farmers markets located in Environmental Justice Communities will receive priority scoring during the review process (5 points). For all Fiscal Year 2025 awarding priorities, please refer to the Request for Response, Section 1F and Section 2C, Evaluation Criteria. All organizations that run farmers markets in Massachusetts are welcome to submit proposals.

Q. To be eligible for the grant, markets must comply with MDAR's Policy on Farmers Markets (section 1A). In the scoring rubric (section 2C, #10), up to five points can be earned for "How closely the market and its operating guidelines/rules align with and meet MDAR's policy on farmers markets." It seems that to be eligible for the grant, the market's guidelines would have to meet MDAR's policy (and so would earn the full five points). Could you explain how this will be scored, and what would cause an application to receive less than five points for this scoring?

A. An application could receive less than 5 points for this evaluation criteria if the market's operating guidelines/rules don't address all components of MDAR's policy. For example, applicants should address terms and conditions of sales including pricing or labeling. If an applicant does not have a policy on pricing and labeling, the applicant may receive less points. Applicants should read MDAR's policy [here \(www.mass.gov/doc/policy-for-massachusetts-farmers-markets/download\)](http://www.mass.gov/doc/policy-for-massachusetts-farmers-markets/download), and make sure each component is clearly incorporated in their individual market's operating guidelines/rules.

Q. A question about calculating the Indirect costs: My understanding is the Indirect would be percentage of the DIRECT costs, thus for a \$10,000 maximum award:

Total Direct: \$9091
Indirect (10% of direct): \$909
Total Grant Request: \$10,000

Our market manager has a sheet from Mass Farmers Market showing indirect calculated so that if the grant request is \$10,000, then a market can ADD on \$1000 to receive \$11,000! Please clarify!

A. The maximum Grant Award is \$10,000 including any indirect costs. Indirect costs are any costs that are incurred for common or joint objectives that therefore, cannot be readily identified with an individual project, program, or organizational activity. They generally include facilities operation and

maintenance costs, depreciation, and administrative expenses. Organizations may utilize their Federally Negotiated Indirect Cost Rate (NICRA). If an applicant does not have a NICRA, please use a de minimis rate of 10%.

Q. Which of the following would be eligible for the sustainability grant:

- 1. Purchase of a square pay device, and other payment processing devices.**
- 2. Membership in the Berkshire Grown organization.**
- 3. We want to expand our educational outreach program to as many of our town residents as possible, especially our low income SNAP recipients. This might include flyers inserted into our local newspaper, direct mail, informational ads in the local shoppers guide, and educational programs in our local library and at our local apartment complex for low income seniors, and also at our affordable housing complex where there are a number of children.**
- 4. Lawn signs**
- 5. Transportation to the market for senior citizens who can't drive .**

and

Q. I would love to apply for a grant for strategic planning for the Farmers' Market. I am particularly interested in Board recruitment. I am also interested in a grant funding to plan and implement the 2025 marketing campaign, which would include a build out of the website's calendar, vendor list, vendor application and putting together a social media plan. Can you point me in the right direction for putting together an application based on these needs? Does that seem feasible?

A. Unfortunately, we can't answer questions that are specific to an applicant or project proposal or that would provide an unfair advantage to anyone looking to submit a response. Projects must enhance farmers markets in Massachusetts through strategic planning, promotion, marketing, consumer education, and infrastructure. **Please refer to the Request for Response (RFR), Sections, 1B, Eligible Project Areas; 1C, Ineligible Project Areas; and 1D Project Requirements.** While all projects that meet the grant requirements will be considered, the categories listed in the RFR are examples of eligible projects. It is not a comprehensive or exhaustive list, and applicants may suggest projects that differ from these suggestions. Applicants have flexibility in determining a project that works for their farmers market and their community.

For all applicants, reviewers will need to understand how projects will enhance the sustainability of the market and meet the goals of the Farmers Market Sustainability Grant Program. Projects must be completed within the contractual timeframe by June 30, 2025.

Please note that membership fees are ineligible.

Q. For the signature on the application that's due on October 8, should I sign it since I am the farmers market manager, and the one filling out the application, or should the signature be of the town administrator, since the market is owned by the town?

A. Either is ok, if you have authority to submit grants on behalf of the farmers market.