



Farmers Market Sustainability Grant Questions and Answers

Updated: 11/20/2023

Q. Would new tents qualify under the infrastructure side of this grant?

A. Yes, tents would be eligible.

Q. Can we apply for this even though our season is coming to an end?

A. Yes. Please see the RFR for eligibility and program details. Note that projects need to be completed by June 30, 2024.

Q. Can the grant be used for SNAP Match funding?

A. Grants cannot be used for SNAP Match funding however funds can be used to support farmers market SNAP programs, for example, SNAP processing equipment and outreach.

Q. If we have received this grant in a prior year, are we eligible to reapply?

A. This grant has not been offered in prior years. Eligible applicants are Massachusetts farmers markets that meet our [Policy for Massachusetts Farmers Markets](#). Be sure to review the complete policy before responding to the RFR.

Q. Do the funds have to be used during the market season? Or can they be used before the market opens.

A. Funds must be expended, and projects completed, by June 30, 2024.

Q. We'd like clarification about what it means to have distinct markets. For instance, we are operating a mobile market that goes to a number of distinct locations that requires different signage and outreach strategies. Would this count as distinct markets?

A. Two distinct markets are two farmers markets in different locations or a summer and winter farmers market. In addition, each farmers market must meet the criteria outlined in Massachusetts' Farmers Market Policy. Please review the [policy](#) thoroughly before applying.

Q. What type of infrastructure does this grant cover?

A. Some examples of farmers market infrastructure include tables, tents, handwashing stations and SNAP processing equipment. Please review the RFR for more details on eligible project areas and eligible expenses. See Section 1B, 1C and 1F.

Q. Can we apply for my salary as well as marketing expenses?

A. Marketing of the farmers market is an eligible expense. Staff/personnel costs to administer a funded project of the grant are eligible. Ineligible expenses include staff/personnel costs unrelated to a funded project of the grant. See Sections 1B, 1C, and 1F.

Q. Would an organization be eligible for the new MDAR grant in its capacity as a statewide organization - that is, if we were to use the funds to develop programs or materials in support of MA farmers markets in general?

A. No, the intent of the funds is to provide funding directly to Massachusetts farmers markets.

Q. According to MDAR's policy on Farmer's Markets, a market must have at least two different farmers selling at it. We don't meet this strict definition; we sell fruits and vegetables purchased from 10 to 15 different Massachusetts farms

every week. However, none of those farmers attend our markets. I'm hoping we're still eligible even though we don't meet this strict definition of a farmer's market.

A. For the purposes of the Farmers Market Sustainability Grant Program, the market does not qualify as a farmers market. To qualify, the market would need to have at least two farm vendors present.

Q. Looking for general information about the program & requirements to determine if an application for our market is possible and a good fit. Specific question: Can you give an example of a written market operations policy that would be required to apply?

A. MDAR has an example of model rules for farmers markets [here](#).

Q. I would like to learn about paying staff to undertake projects funded by the grant and how that would work.

A. Staff/personnel costs to administer a funded project of the grant are eligible. Ineligible expenses include staff/personnel costs unrelated to a funded project of the grant. See Sections 1B, 1C, and 1F.

Q. Can you start and then save items in the application and finish at another time?

A. The application can be saved while working on it for up to 30 days. Click "Save and Resume Later" at the bottom of the form and then click on "Save and Get Link." A link to the application will be provided which must be copied and saved to return to the application. A good way to ensure that the link is not lost is to email it to yourself. Please note that all files that have been uploaded at the end of the application will not be saved if leaving the site before submitting the application. The files must be uploaded again upon re-entering the site and submitting the application.

Q. Is this a reimbursable grant?

A. Yes. We typically reimburse invoices on a quarterly schedule.

Q. Can letters of reference be from a market vendor or should this be an outside source?

A. This would be up to the applicant's preferences.

Q. What if our farmers market launches in late-spring and we thus don't have a confirmed list of participating vendors at this time?

A. Use the best list you have at the time of the application.

Q. If you have received a MDAR sustainability grant in the past are you eligible to apply?

A. Yes

Q. If this includes printed ads, will it count if the final ad comes out in July if paid in June, or does the actual output have to be complete by June 30?

A. All deliverables must be completed by June 30

Q. With regard to the Environmental Justice Map, what's the difference between the designation of income or minority? Our town is partially green, but not fully. What does that mean?

A. EJ Communities are census block groups that meet certain criteria, so the different shading reflect which criteria the census block group meets. Any shading would reflect an EJ Community. Report that in your application.

Q. Wondering whether you anticipate that this will be an annual grant going forward?

A. This year's grant is funded through funds from MDAR's operating budget. Grant funding for future years will depend on appropriation of funds through the annual budget process.

Q. I know the grant can't cover SNAP match funding, but could it cover communications and advertising regarding our SNAP Match program?

A. Yes.

Q. Is MDAR looking for impact data showing effectiveness of grant program for potential future funding?

A. A final report will be required by July 31, 2024. While the exact components for the report have not been determined at this time, any impact data you have as a result of your project should be included.

Q. Will very small markets be considered given the impact may be less than larger ones?

A. Yes.

Q. Would a storage unit on site be considered equipment or an ineligible expense?

A. A storage unit can be considered however, please note that the grant does not allow for construction costs.

Q. A rented unit would be ineligible then?

A. Rental costs may only be incurred until June 30. Note: Rent or lease costs for market space is ineligible.

Q. I saw on the updated policy document that MDAR suggests including a written grievance procedure in farm market policy. Can you elaborate on this?

A. Having a written grievance procedure is a recommendation, but not a requirement. There is an example of a grievance procedure in MDAR's model rules for farmers market posted on MDAR's [website](#).

Q. Can a Farmers Market can request less than \$10,000 such as a \$5,000 grant?

A. Yes.

Q. Can grants be used for stipends for members of an advisory group to the market (comprised of food insecure individuals)?

A. Yes.

Q. In the updated farmers market policy, it says that market rules need to be approved by MDAR when a market applies for a MDAR sponsored grant. Would markets need to get rules approved before submitting this grant application?

A. No. Submit the rules with your application through the online application portal.

Q. We were hoping to provide marketing stipends to vendors as part of our project. Would the vendors need to use those stipends by June 30th?

A. Yes.

Q. Can we request funding for multiple project areas (ex. promotion/marketing and equipment) or do we need to focus on just one?

A. Yes, you can request funding for multiple project areas.

Q. Will you be offering a SNAP Equipment Grant again?

A. The SNAP Equipment Grant was funded by USDA to the Department of Transitional Assistance and ended in September, 2022. MDAR is not currently aware of additional funding from USDA. Farmers Markets can look at MarketLink (www.marketlink.org) to check their eligibility. The Farmers Market Sustainability grant can fund SNAP processing equipment that is not already funded through an outside source (Hardware only: no yearly, monthly, transaction fees or subscriptions). For information on SNAP processing, go to <https://www.mass.gov/info-details/snap-and-hip-at-farmers-markets-and-farms>.

Q. We do not know exactly what our costs will be. Can we put those costs in the "Other" section of the budget?"

A. A strong budget reflects a thought-out financial plan that includes accurate costs of services and goods requested. Also, note projects that involve hiring a subcontractor must include quotes from the subcontractor.

Q. Does planning such as working for 501c3 status and a strategic plan effort qualify?

A. Yes

Q. Is more than one quote required if funds are requested for a subcontractor like a marketing or board consultant?

A. No, but applicants are encouraged to obtain multiple quotes. With your application, include the quote for the subcontractor you plan to hire.

Q. Is there a character or word count for the narrative responses in the portal?

A. No.

Q. Will this grant cover the purchase of a USED vehicle to deliver our gear to market sites?

A. No.

Q. Can I use this grant to buy a tractor to help my farm?

A. No.

Q. Does MDAR have any restrictions on providing funding to a Farmers Market if its fiscal agent is a religious institution.

A. No

Q. Will partial awards be provided for certain activities and not others? Or is this grant an "all or nothing" opportunity where if any part of the project does not meet the goals of the grant and is not funded then none of it will be funded?

A. MDAR reserves the right to fund the project in part, add and delete tasks, and ask for clarification on the work plan, timeline, and budget.

Q. Is it recommended to apply for the maximum award and multiple activities, given that MDAR expects to award 10-15 contracts up to \$10,000 or \$15,000 (more or less equal to the funds available) or is it recommended to apply for a couple of focused activities and request a smaller amount?

A. MDAR cannot make a recommendation on this. The number of awarded contracts will depend on how many grant applications are received, how many are eligible, funds requested and evaluators' scores. Applicants should make their own determination of funding needs.

Q. Is it recommended to scale the amount requested based on your Market size? For example, if a Market's operating budget is only \$2,500 or it only has 10 vendors, would there be points withheld in the application for applying for the full \$10,000 award?

A. Applicants should make their own determination of funding needs. Applications will be reviewed based on the Evaluation Criteria as outlined within the RFR.

Q. Are there any rules that need to be followed around using this grant to pay for personnel's time? (Minimum amount per hour, etc.?) Or can it be used however the applicant deems appropriate to complete the project (stipend-based instead of hourly pay, for example)

A. Staff/personnel costs to administer a funded project of the grant are eligible. Ineligible expenses include staff/personnel costs unrelated to a funded project of the grant. See Sections 1B, 1C, and 1F. MDAR doesn't have minimum amounts per hour or other requirements for how staff should be paid. Details should be provided in the budget attachment.

Q. I'm wondering how competitive this grant is.

A. MDAR has \$100,000 available for the program. The number of awarded contracts will depend on how many grant applications are received, how many are eligible, funds requested and evaluators' scores.

Q. There are a few potential project areas I could apply for, looking at the list of eligible programs. Not sure if it recommended that applicants just choose one.

A. MDAR cannot make a recommendation on this. Applicants should make their own determination of funding needs.