

FAQs

- 1. Both our farmer's market and retail store accept SNAP and HIP. Can this new grant opportunity be used to offset costs related to equipment and fees associated to servicing/licensing of the mobile app?**

Reimbursement for costs related to *new* HIP/SNAP processing points, including equipment and mobile service fees, are eligible project proposals.

- 2. Is there a specific amount of funding set aside for HIP equipment?**

No.

- 3. Do HIP equipment applications need to include a budget?**

Yes, as required on the application form.

- 4. Are there maximum amounts the state will pay for each identified piece of HIP equipment?**

No, costs will vary dependent upon the needs of the individual applicant.

- 5. If a business is applying for funding for capital work on their farm stand and for HIP equipment, is it preferable to submit that as one proposal or as two?**

As HIP equipment project proposals should align with the NOO process, two separate applications would be appropriate.

- 6. Will applications to this program be accepted for farms that are not yet approved by DTA but have applied? Or do these businesses need to get approved by DTA BEFORE they apply (NOO at: <https://www.mass.gov/healthy-incentives-program-hip-notice-of-opportunity-noo>)?**

Farms should complete the NOO application through DTA and upon approval of their application, they may apply to the RFR for funding for related costs.

- 7. Can we submit 3 infrastructural applications or is it best to submit everything at once? My colleagues are concerned that separate applications will compete against one another.**

Applications are reviewed on a rolling basis through September 15th, 2020, and the grant review team will review each application based on the merits of the project proposal. It is at the discretion of the applicant to determine whether it is advantageous to submit multiple proposals or a single application.

- 8. If a business submits three proposals, can all three be awarded and contracted?**

Yes, up to three projects can be submitted and are eligible for awards.

- 9. Do I need to fill out an application for each crop or can it be one application? I would like to fund a CSA, grow mushrooms, and beans for drying.**

You may fill out one application and clearly identify the full scope of your project proposal.

- 10. I am having difficulty accessing the online application to the Food Security Grant. The link below does not access the application questions. It only links to general information. Please advise.**

The direct link to the application form can be located at the following link: <https://www.mass.gov/forms/food-security-application-questions>. Additional questions will populate once you respond yes/no to the question “Are you only applying for SNAP/HIP EBT-processing equipment?”

11. Are there word count limits on responses?

There is no word limit for responses.

12. If we would like to submit quotes/estimates and letters of support with our application, where should they be submitted or attached?

The application portal has been updated to allow for attachments.

13. I see a place to attach a budget and a DTA application. Is there another area to attach letters of support and/or estimates?

Please attach any additional supporting materials under the budget section. If it does not allow you to upload multiple attachments beyond the budget, please let us know. You can also save all attachments in one PDF and upload under the budget section.

14. As there is rolling submission through September 15th, when will awards be announced? Will there be multiple award announcements?

Awards will be made on a rolling basis as contracts are finalized with successful applicants.

15. Is food purchasing included in this grant?

Food is not an eligible project.

16. Could we apply for storage needs?

Storage and refrigeration are eligible project proposals.

17. Is there a date by when reviews will begin?

At this time, a date certain has not been set to review applications. This is dependent upon when the first applications are received.

18. What labor can be funded and what cannot?

All labor-related costs, for both non-ag and ag entities, are not eligible for reimbursement. Capital funds may not be used for labor of any kind, direct or in-direct.

19. Would it be permissible to include funding for a short-term consultant who will develop systems (i.e. inventory management, waste management, food safety) for a food hub, in order to operationalize the infrastructure investment?

Labor is not an allowable expense under the scope of the grant. Technical assistance is an allowable reimbursable expense and a contractor may qualify under this section, depending on the full scope of the project.

20. In the case of purchasing vans or refrigerated trucks to improve infrastructure related to emergency food and meal delivery to at-risk populations, could this grant cover the costs associated with hiring and employing vehicle drivers?

In regards to reimbursable expenditures under the grant, refrigerated trucks or vans would be eligible. However, any labor costs associated with the project such as drivers would not be allowed under the grant due to capital budget restrictions.

21. Will an entire application be rejected if part of the proposed project is not an eligible capital expense or will the agency negotiate?

Applications will be reviewed in their entirety and eligible capital projects will be given consideration for funding; Ineligible capital expenses as part of an application will not render the entire project proposal ineligible.

22. I would like to use grant funding to build a year round hydroponics facility that would serve the food bank of western Massachusetts. The grant literature alludes to both having an existing business that has been impacted or needs to react to Covid but also new businesses that are addressing food insecurity. I am hoping to just get a bit of clarification on my project's potential eligibility.

Eligible projects will allow eligible entities to adapt to disruptions and the increase in food insecurity caused by COVID-19, while allowing greater access to local food in a way that supports customer and worker safety and addresses systemic inequities around access to fresh, local food. Projects will support the immediate and projected needs of the Commonwealth's local food system, including (i) information technology needs; (ii) facility adaptation to new safety guidelines; (iii) storage, processing, and delivery equipment to adapt to supply chain disruptions and to serve food insecure residents, and (iv) other strategies that connect local food production with food insecure communities and residents and increase food equity for all residents. Applicants are limited to three grant applications per review period. Eligible projects must be for infrastructure and must be eligible for capital funding. The grant review team will need to review the application to ensure it is in line with the goals of the grant.

23. When should proposals assume work would begin? Will it be 10/15, regardless of when a proposal is submitted, or a certain number of weeks past the date of submission?

Applications will be reviewed on a rolling basis and the contract process will start upon approval of the project. Thus, contracts will depend upon the date submitted and acceptance of the contract terms.

24. Will the reviewers recommend partial applications for funding or reject the entire application if there is a portion of the proposal that scores weakly?

Partial applications for funding will be considered by the review team, based on the availability of funding and merits of the grant application.

25. How will the review committee weigh each of the 6 evaluation criteria? Are all criteria equal in weight?

The review team has developed an internal scoring metric for proposals and will assign points on a to-be-determined weighted basis.

26. Can you elaborate on “information technology needs”? Does this include hardware and/or software?

Hardware and/or software, such as online sales platforms or training modules, would be eligible project proposals under the scope of the grant.

27. Can you elaborate on “food waste management equipment”? Does this include equipment for food rescue organizations, including storage, repackaging etc.?

Composting, storage, and repackaging equipment would be eligible project proposals under the scope of the grant.

28. Can this grant be used to rent or purchase a space (to house cold storage and loading docks, for example)? If this is an option, could several organizations collaborate on a food hub-type model for rescued food?

Joint proposals are acceptable under the scope of the grant. However, rent costs are not eligible for reimbursement due to capital funding limitations.

29. Do the projects need to be shovel ready? I understand that they must be completed within a year, barring an optional extension.

Projects are anticipated to be shovel ready upon application, however if supporting materials indicate the full scope of the proposal and potential need for an extension, that will be taken into consideration.