

## **APPLICATION QUESTIONS**

**Q: Can applicants apply any other way than through the online form, such as a Word document, or mail in an application?**

**A: The online form is the only way we can accept applications. Applications submitted in other forms will not be considered.**

**Q: Do I have to provide multiple quotes for the project to be considered?**

**A: Applicants must provide quotes as part of their application. However, multiple quotes are not required for the same project.**

**Q: Do I have to use the Budget Form available on the FSIG website?**

**A: A Budget Form template (Attachment B. Budget Template) is available under 'File Attachments' on the [Commbuys](#), however applicants are not required to use this specific form. Please note that a budget is required for all submissions to be eligible, and we recommend either using either the form provided, or providing a budget in a similar format.**

**Q: Is providing documentation for the balance of funding required, and is it just for the match or the entire project costs?**

**A: Balance of funding documentation is not required to be considered under the FSIG Program. However, applicants that do provide it may receive additional points in the review. The documentation should be for the entire project costs, and not just the match requirement.**

**Q: What is the word count limits for the online application questions?**

**A: There is no word count limit. However, some questions only ask for 2-3 sentence answers. Others will require more detailed responses.**

**Q: Can I include tables or images in the online application questions?**

**A: No, the online application platform we are using (Formstack) does not allow tables or images to be included in the answer boxes. You would need to save it in a word or pdf document and then upload under "Optional Documents" in the application portal.**

**Q: Do I have to complete all the answers through the on-line application? For example, if I wanted to email the timeline as a separate document, is that allowed?**

**A: Answers should be completed through the online application. Please do not send separate documents for questions that can be completed through the online application.**

## FY26 Questions and Answers

Q: I am the Ag Extension Educator for Plymouth County. I am working on supporting a local farmer with the FSIG application. He is applying for infrastructure to restore the former Peaceful Meadows Dairy farm in Whitman which he purchased a few years back. It is outlined in the RFP that the application needs to be site specific. Just want to confirm that he is applying with information for only the Whitman location although they have a location in Norwell.

**A: Please disclose the proposed project site location in the application. You have the option of listing a different mailing address if applicable.**

Q: For Attachment A, in the section requesting information on estimated food purchases in 2024, should we provide FY24 or CY24 estimates?

**A: Please provide calendar year 2024 estimates.**

Q: I have a question on question 3h - Estimated food sales \*if applicable. As a K-12 school district I'm not sure if I should answer this or not. Based on the price of a meal I could estimate our sales since we are universally free or is it best to leave blank?

**A: To maintain a fair process, we can't give specific guidance on how applicants should answer questions. The question you are referring to is intended for applicants that primarily sell food products. We also have questions for applicants that primarily buy/source food. Depending on the applicant's operation, you may respond to just one or both. Providing estimates for these questions is fine. The intention of these questions is to learn about where local food system entities are selling food products or buying food from.**

Q: As an Emergency Food Pantry, are we correct that we should apply for the Food Access and Availability category, as opposed to the Local and Regional Mid Supply Chain Expansion? Both categories refer to increased cold storage capacity and expansions.

**A: Please select the project type based on the purpose of the proposed project. The purposes are listed in the chart in section 3 of the RFR.**

Q: Must copies of the quotes from vendors or contractors be uploaded with the application? or are the quotes simply entered into the budget document?

**A: Yes, quotes must be uploaded with the application. Under section "9. Required Documentation" of the online application, you can upload the quotes.**

Q: I'm working with a cranberry producer who has been in business for 30 years on Cape Cod, and a seventh-generation cranberry farmer. They are a small, 10-acre bog with large plans for on-farm processing. They plan to spend \$250,000 to build an on-farm facility to include cranberry processing, a farm stand, cranberry storage and include an element of historical education that draws consumers to their location. As larger growers consolidate the cranberry industry, they goal is to strengthen the resilience of their business and connection to the Commonwealth's residents. They align with FSIG's priority of: Expand resilience and supply chain connections in the middle-of-the-supply chain to aggregate, process, manufacture, store, distribute or wholesale local foods for the Commonwealth's residents. That said, their "middle-of-the-supply-chain" is choosing to

## FY26 Questions and Answers

develop-on-farm processing to strengthen the physical infrastructure that will keep cranberries local to Massachusetts and encourage direct-to-consumer sales. The Project Type, "Expansion of Ag & Seafood Production" could fit. But it also stems into "Local and Regional Mid-supply Chain Expansion." Can you advise on which Project Type this could align with? What additional information would you need to help us align with a project type?

**A: We can't advise on which specific project type to choose but would encourage applicants to do their best to select the project type based on the **primary purpose of the proposed project**. We understand there may be some overlap but please select based on the specific purpose and foremost impact the project will have.**

Q: Page 1 refers to partner organizations - "contributing" to the project. Is this a reference to financial contributions only? Or - can they simply be distribution partners as well?

**A: Please list any partners that are directly involved with the project in any way.**

Q: Page 3 - "operation entity" - we are a municipality but that is not listed as an option. Should we check "public" or "other"?

**A: If you are applying on behalf of a town or city, please select public.**

Q: Is the \$10,000 minimum the project amount or the award amount? Can you apply for a \$10,000 project, with a \$2,000 match and an \$8,000 grant? Or is the minimum someone can apply for a \$12,500 project with a \$2,500 match and a \$10,000 grant?

**A: \$10,000 is the minimum **award** amount. Funding requests less than \$10,000 will not be considered.**

Q: Applicants with requests over \$100,000 are strongly encouraged to include a recent business plan with their application. However, all submitted FSIG application materials become part of the public record, and business plans often contain sensitive financial details that applicants do not wish to publicly disclose. Will applicants be at a disadvantage if they include a more limited or redacted version of their business plan and/or financial projections? Can you provide any guidance on what key information reviewers will be looking for in any submitted business/financial documents?

**A: Reviewers will consider any business plans submitted during the evaluation process as further context of the operation, their financial health, and their goals/strategies in order to make the best investment of the FSIG funds. Applicants that submit business plans may receive additional points. Applicants can redact any information they do not want to become public record.**

Q: Do we need to, or would you recommend that applicants get a Letter (or letters) of Support for every listed Partner organization in their application?

**A: Letters of support are optional, but we strongly encourage larger and more costly projects (\$100,000+) to submit them.**

## FY26 Questions and Answers

Q: Does the mailing address need to be a physical address or can a PO Box be used? We use the address of our Board President if a physical address is needed.

A: The mailing address does not need to be physical but we ask applicants for their site address as well if different from the mailing.

Q: If the application is for a vehicle, does the site address refer to the organization's address or the address of where the vehicle will be parked? If the latter, what documentation is required?

A: The site address refers to the organization's physical site, if different than mailing address.

Q: Question "2 j" in the RFR is: *Have you received any of the MDAR grants listed below in the last 5 years? Check all that apply.*—will this affect our application if we have received one of the listed grants?

A: If an applicant has received another MDAR grant, the review team may check with the grant manager for any noncompliance as part of the administrative review (section 5D of RFR).

Q: Question "4 c" in the RFR is: *I have applied to another grant program for costs associated with this project.*—would an answer of "yes" impact our application?

A: MDAR will consider additional funding from outside sources favorably if part of the overall project as part of a match, however applicants are discouraged from seeking grant funding for the same costs included in the FSIG application. You should not include any costs that are covered by another grant program.

Q: Question "5 b" in the RFR is: *Describe how the project is incorporating, or will allow, multi-sector collaborations/partnerships, and how the collaborations/partnerships will strengthen the Massachusetts food supply chain.*—would this require, or would a letter (or letters) of support be recommended here?

A: Letters of support are optional, but we strongly encourage larger and more costly projects (\$100,000+) to submit them.

Q: Question "10 a." in the RFR is: *While not required... business plans (created or updated in the past 3 years) may receive additional points – especially when considering larger projects-- is a recently completed strategic plan sufficient?*

A: The intention of submitting a business plan is to provide reviewers with further context of the operation, their financial health, and their goals/strategies. If the strategic plan provides the same information, you are welcome to submit (though this is optional).

Q: Can you please clarify for me the role that Commbuys plays in this application process?

A: COMMBUYS is the Commonwealth's e-procurement system. All Agencies are required to post Grant opportunities on COMMBUYS to allow for the widest visibility to potential applicants. The posting contains all the information about the Grant and is where interested applicants can view the FSIG FY26 RFR and related materials. The actual application should be submitted here - <https://www.mass.gov/forms/food-security-infrastructure-grant-fsig-application-fy26>.



Q: Please confirm: registration on Commbuys is not required to complete this application.

A: No, it is not required to submit an application.

Q: Last year when I asked: As a public school district applying for a FSIG grant, does the application requirement for submission of a *Supplier Diversity Program Plan form* apply. MDAR answered: "No, we do not need that for the purposes of this RFR. All the required documentation is listed in the RFR." Is that still correct?

A: Yes, that is still correct for the FY26 RFR.

## ELIGIBILITY QUESTIONS

Q: This is my first year in operation, am I eligible to apply to FSIG? What if my operation has been in business for multiple years, but this is a new venture for my business?

A: To be eligible applicants must be in operation for a minimum of three years to the date of the application.

Q: If I don't have a written lease agreement, am I eligible to apply?

A: Yes, you are eligible to apply. However, if your proposed project is selected for funding, some type of written documentation will be required that shows the legal relationship between the parties to ensure the correct entity/individual who legally owns the property is allowing the proposed project to be completed on their land. The lease should include things like a description of the property, type of use(s) allowed, duration, and signatures of the parties involved, including the landowner.

Q: I read through the RFR for the FSIG and it appears there is no longer a 3 year land tenure requirement to apply. I just want to make sure this is correct.

A: We cannot determine eligibility outside of the review process. All requirements are outlined in the RFR. Please review the criteria and if you feel the applicant meets this eligibility and the goals of the program with long term impacts, then please submit an application.

Q: Is a farmer allowed to apply for both the MEGA and the FSIG for the same FY?

A: On the FSIG application, please disclose if the applicant is applying to another grant for the same project. We have a question that relates to this so it can easily be disclosed. Generally, farmers are allowed to apply to both MEGA and FSIG (or another MDAR grant). If they are applying for the same project under both programs, they can only be funded for one. If they are applying for different projects, that is generally allowed.



# FY26 FOOD SECURITY INFRASTRUCTURE GRANT (FSIG)

## FY26 Questions and Answers

Q: I am building a larger lobster boat for our lobster fishing business. Would this be a good candidate for the grant? We're expecting to be able to increase our catch and provide more seafood to the commonwealth.

A: MDAR cannot assist in the preparation of grant applications. In order to maintain integrity of the competitive grant process, MDAR is unable to advise and/or provide individuals with any information regarding specific applications during the solicitation process. The goals of the FSIG program, along with all applicant and project eligibility requirements, can be found in the RFR.

Q: Could you tell me if this grant would include people growing hydroponic food for the public outdoors, or indoors in a greenhouse? We have donated Tower Gardens for many years to organizations and schools. Our commercial gardens have been placed all over the country and the world for growing vegetables on food farms. I have seen it as a great way to end food deserts to grow vertically and save space where there is very little land to grow.

A: MDAR cannot assist in the preparation of grant applications. In order to maintain integrity of the competitive grant process, MDAR is unable to advise and/or provide individuals with any information regarding specific applications during the solicitation process. The goals of the FSIG program, along with all applicant and project eligibility requirements, can be found in the RFR.

Q: Is the purchase of a refrigerated truck (not a pickup truck or UTV vehicle) allowable?

A: Please refer to section 3 of the RFR for information on project eligibility.

Q: Are we able to apply for this new round of FSIG even though we were awarded in a previous round?

A: Yes, previous FSIG awardees can apply.

Q: Would ongoing payment of fees (through the allowable grant period only) for a physical warehouse space that increases and expands cold storage/distribution capacity and makes fresh, local food more accessible to emergency food providers be considered an allowable expense? The warehouse could include cold storage (fridge and freezer), dock space, packing space, kitchen space, and dry storage. Would operation and occupancy costs for the same purposes listed above be considered an allowable expense?

A: This is a grant for capital infrastructure. Eligible projects must be capital improvements including the purchase of equipment and, if necessary, contracted labor costs to implement projects, or costs associated with planning and design directly related to capital projects. Please refer to section 3 of the RFR for information about eligible projects and ineligible expenses.

Q: I signed up for the discussion (focus group) about the FSIG grant and my organization is applying for FY26 funding. Can I still attend the focus group?

A: Anyone who intends to apply to the current open application for FSIG FY26 should not participate in the focus groups.

## FY26 Questions and Answers

Q: We are interested in applying for three pieces of equipment towards the grant. Is this allowed or are we specifically only allowed to qualify for one specific piece of equipment? All tie into each other and are strictly for food safety and supply chain so my guess is the three would be ok but just looking for clarification on the matter. In total I expect the project to be less than 25000. (that's in adding expected costs through tariffs.)

A: Applicants can apply for multiple pieces of equipment as long as all the equipment is a part of a single project and the pieces of equipment are eligible expenses. Included in the webinar and webinar slides (located on [www.mass.gov/ApplytoFSIG](http://www.mass.gov/ApplytoFSIG)) is an example budget that includes multiple pieces of equipment as part of a single project. That may be helpful to review.

Q: I am a school nurse and heard about The Food Security Infrastructure Grant and I wondered how families apply to be recipients of the program?

A: This is a capital infrastructure grant program for businesses, non-profits, public and tribal entities that contribute to the Commonwealth's food system. It funds equipment and contracted labor costs. It does not directly provide food to families. Please refer to section 2 of the RFR for more information about eligible applicants.

Q: I am interested in applying to the FSIG grant this year for a deer fence project. We are a small, diversified non-profit vegetable farm and due to our location deer pressure is very high and consistently impacting our yields. Would this type of project be eligible / considered for this grant program?

A: MDAR cannot assist in the preparation of grant applications. In order to maintain integrity of the competitive grant process, MDAR is unable to advise and/or provide individuals with any information regarding specific applications during the solicitation process. The goals of the FSIG program, along with all applicant and project eligibility requirements, can be found in the RFR.

Q: If we have applied for certain projects in the past and been denied, are we able to submit for funding of these same projects for 2026?

A: There is nothing prohibiting this, but please be sure to review the goals of the FSIG program and all applicant and project eligibility requirements before submitting another application.

Q: Are we able to request more than the max of \$1,000,000 assuming some may not be approved?

A: No. \$1,000,000 is the maximum award amount. Requests over this amount will not be considered.

Q: Can a business outside MA apply if they have food production inside MA?

A: Applicants must be located in Massachusetts and operating within Massachusetts.

Q: I know that past FSIG applicants/awardees are eligible to apply but is there a cap on the amount someone has received in the past that would make their application this year ineligible (e.g., \$1M)?

A: There is no cap.



## FY26 Questions and Answers

Q: The farm business has been in operation for 4 years. She has been leasing the land she is currently on for only 2 years. Can she apply for the FSIG?

A: We cannot determine eligibility outside of the review process. All requirements are outlined in the RFR. Please review the criteria and if you feel the applicant meets this eligibility and the goals of the program with long term impacts, then please submit an application.

Q: I fish nearly every day but I'm not a commercial fisherman. Would I be eligible for a grant to supply fresh fish under to grant program?

A: We cannot determine eligibility outside of the review process. All requirements are outlined in the RFR. Please review the criteria and if you feel you meet the applicant and project eligibility criteria, as well as the goals of the program with long term impacts, then please submit an application.

Q: If two owners have two separate companies with independent tax ID numbers. May they apply for both companies individually? Or do they have to choose what company to apply for?

A: Applicants can only submit 1 proposal per unique tax identification number. If the same owner has 2 separate companies with 2 separate tax ID numbers, they may submit 1 application per company/unique tax ID number.

Q: I am reaching out with a clarifying question related to the FY26 MDAR FSIG funding opportunity - if an organization is a member of a collaborative, and the collaborative is applying for MDAR FSIG funding, can the organization still apply for funds that are separated from the collaborative's funding request?

A: Applicants may only submit one proposal and may not be included as part of any other proposal. The applicant would need to choose between applying on their own or as part of the collaborative.

Q: Is the FSIG subject to prevailing wage law?

A: It is the responsibility of any contractor to ensure compliance with Prevailing Wage Requirements, when applicable. [Prevailing Wage Program | Mass.gov](#)

Q: On p. 2 of the RFR, it states: *Eligible projects must be capital improvements, including the purchase of equipment and contracted labor costs in order to implement projects, or costs associated with planning and design directly related to capital projects that will allow applicants to strengthen and improve the resiliency of the Commonwealth's food system and food supply chain (see details in Section 3).* If the request is for the purchase of a van/vehicle, can a budgeted item be insurance costs and/or training in the use of the vehicle?

A: Please see section 3 of the RFR for project eligibility.

Q: I see that "projects requesting funding for used equipment and/or materials." is not an eligible expense. Please confirm that this means that if we are applying for the purchase of a van, it has to be a new van.



## FY26 Questions and Answers

A: Projects requesting funding for used equipment and/or materials are not eligible (section 3 of RFR).

## BUDGET AND MATCH QUESTIONS

Q: Can the match be in-kind? Can I use other grant funding towards it?

A: The match must be a cash match and cannot be in-kind. Additional grant funding can be used towards the match as long as it is not other state grant funds.

Q: Can the costs of shipping, and installation be included in the request?

A: Yes, the costs of shipping and installation can be included in the total project costs.

Q: We are wondering what types of expenses can be used as a cash match (i.e., staff salaries, supplies, rent, etc.)

A: The match must be a cash match, meaning the applicant must contribute a certain percentage of their own money based on the total project cost. In-kind matches are not eligible. Please refer to section 4C (pg. 7) of the RFR for details on the match requirement.

Q: Can we use something off a website for pricing and then use words like “or similar”?

A: Applicants must provide quotes as part of their application. The quotes must depict the exact items and/or contracted labor that the applicant is requesting to purchase as part of the proposed project. All submitted quotes will be reviewed for eligibility.

Q: Do the funds for the match need to be in hand? How does an applicant verify they are in hand?

A: Please see Section 4C of the RFR. There is a question in the application asking about how the project how will be funded up-front and how a cash match will be provided.

Q: Related to the question of the match: we have been invited to submit a full proposal for funding for this project from another funder. Can we list that as a potential source of funding (i.e. we are in process of pursuing this funding, and if it doesn't work out, we will provide the funding via another channel)? And if we are not able to list the funds that we're pursuing in the proposal as a match, can we use it as a match at a later time if we get it?

A: Please see Section 4C of the RFR. There is a question in the application asking about how the project how will be funded up-front and how a cash match will be provided.

Q: Please confirm that line items that can't be funded by the grant, can we list them in the budget and state that it will be funded by other sources?



## FY26 Questions and Answers

**A: The budget submitted should be for the FSIG project only.**

Q: Please confirm: the template budget form is provided as a guide—we can provide our own budget form outlining expenses and costs? Do you have a preferred format for submission? Can you please remind me—from where can we download a budget form that is fillable?

**A: Yes, that is correct. You can download the fillable budget template (Attachment B. FSIG FY26 Budget Template) on COMMBUYS -**

**<https://www.commbuys.com/bso/external/bidDetail.sdo?docId=BD-25-1002-1003-001-114407&external=true&parentUrl=close>.**

## FUNDING PROCESS AND TIMELINE QUESTIONS

Q: When to you estimate awards will be released?

**A: We estimate that awards will be released in September of 2025.**

Q: Will the award amounts be taxable?

**A: Applicants may receive a 1099-G for funding received under the FSIG Program. MDAR cannot give any tax advice and applicants should reach out to a tax professional for questions regarding the implications of receiving this funding.**

Q: How will MDAR distribute the funding?

**A: Applicants who are receiving funding will be required to enter into a contract with the Department before receiving funding. This includes documentation such as a Standard Contract form, a W-9, and an Electronic Funds Transfer (EFT) Form. More information about the required documentation is outlined in the RFR.**

Q: Can I start the project before awards are made?

**A: No, applicants that start a project or incur costs outside of a contract with the Department are not eligible for reimbursement under the FSIG Program.**

Q: Will there be any extensions if I am unable to complete the project by June 30th, 2025?

**A: Projects are required to be completed by June 30<sup>th</sup>, 2026. Larger projects (\$500,000+) may be considered for extensions on a case-by-case basis at the sole discretion of MDAR.**

Q: We are considering applying for a grant to support a planned kitchen renovation at our charter public high school in Cambridge, MA, so we can serve healthier and more nutritious meals to nearly 500 students. I see that, if we received the grant, we wouldn't likely have a signed contract until September 2025; and that it is a reimbursement grant. I also see that the grant covers the period from July 1, 2025 - June 30, 2026. Since we are hoping to start renovations this summer, we



# FY26 FOOD SECURITY INFRASTRUCTURE GRANT (FSIG)

## FY26 Questions and Answers

wondered if we would be allowed to request reimbursements for purchases made in July and August 2025?

**A: Only expenses incurred during the period of the contract are eligible for reimbursement. Any incurred project costs prior to an executed contract are not eligible for reimbursement from MDAR.**

Q: Our organization is in the process of applying for a permit for renovation and expansion of our Main Food Pantry. We have already selected a contractor, who is assisting us with the permit application, but work has not yet begun. If we apply and receive a grant contract, are we able to seek reimbursement for work that is invoiced after our grant contract date?

**A: Only expenses incurred during the period of the contract are eligible for reimbursement. Any incurred project costs prior to an executed contract are not eligible for reimbursement from MDAR.**

Q: I just spoke to the equipment dealer who I was thinking of getting this trailer from and he can give me a call but of course everything will change when tariffs come in, I'm just wondering what the situation is if the price is going to rise within the next couple of months?

**A: Awards will be based on the quotes and project budget submitted with the application. If awarded, applicants will be required to enter into a contract with the Commonwealth. During the contracting period, the final award amount will be determined.**

Q: What is the total size of the funding pool in this round? Is there a rough or precise allocation for the different project/awardee categories?

**A: All funding is subject to state appropriation. As of today (4/15/25), we do not know the total amount of funding allocated to FSIG in FY26. The proposals will be awarded according to score (see section 5D for the evaluation criteria), not by project category, and subject to available funds.**