

FY27 FSIG Webinar Recording

Recorded March 26th 2026

Presenters: Holly Velleca & Molly Hansen MDAR

[MA Dept of Agricultural Resources (MDAR)] 11:16:00

Hello everyone! Welcome to the FY27

[MA Dept of Agricultural Resources (MDAR)] 11:16:04

Food security infrastructure grant program informational webinar.

[MA Dept of Agricultural Resources (MDAR)] 11:16:09

my name's Holly I'm the FSIG Management Specialist from MDAR's Division of Food Security.

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And my name is Molly and I am a grant contractor with the Food Security Infrastructure Grant.

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So before we get started I just wanted to say that this recording and the presentation slides

[MA Dept of Agricultural Resources (MDAR)] 11:16:31

are posted on our application webpage which is linked here.

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Sotoday we're going to go over the FSIG priorities.

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We're going to provide an overview of the grant timeline. We'll provide an overview of the FY27 RFR.

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We'll talk about the application and submission process.

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We'll provide an overview of the review process

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And guidance for submitting questions.

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In this webinar is really more high-level information about the grant opportunity.

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So we won't be able to cover everything outlined in the RFR.

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So highly encourage you to read through that if you're interested.

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So just some background on the Food Security Infrastructure Grant. It was established back in 2020 using our funds.

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As part of the state food security task force to address supply chain disruptions

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And widespread food insecurity during COVID.

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this grant addresses supply chain disruptions and long-term food security through infrastructure and equipment investments across the supply chain.

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since its inception FSIG has awarded \$126.6 million.

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to 927 projects.

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And it's been managed by our department the Department of Agricultural Resources

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Since 2025.

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So the overall goals of the grant program are to fund infrastructure projects that increase

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Local food production and consumption enhance mid-supply chain capacity for processing storage and distribution for local markets.

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and build and ensure a more safe resilient and accessible food supply especially during periods of widespread food insecurity and supply chain disruptions.

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And the goal is to also benefit underserved and or under-resourced communities. And local food is defined here through

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This program as edible food products grown raised harvested or wild.

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slash produce and consumed within the Commonwealth.

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So for FY27 here are some of our priorities.

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We're hoping to increase supply or availability of affordable nutritious

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And or locally produced foods for underserved and under-resourced communities.

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We hope to address food supply system vulnerabilities that could lead to shortages

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during extreme weather events or disruptions.

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And expand capacity for aggregation processing manufacturing and or distribution.

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of locally grown raised or caught foods to Massachusetts consumers.

[MA Dept of Agricultural Resources (MDAR)] 11:19:20

So some general overview of the grant and it's capital infrastructure only so that means durable equipment that will last 5 plus years.

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And if necessary a contracted labor costs.

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So unfortunately this grant program does not cover things like staff costs or general operating supplies things like that.

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it is a reimbursement program and the contracts run through June 30th 2027.

[MA Dept of Agricultural Resources (MDAR)] 11:19:47

It's a 20% cash match requirement.

[MA Dept of Agricultural Resources (MDAR)] 11:19:50

With a \$10000 minim award and up to \$500000 maxim award.

[MA Dept of Agricultural Resources (MDAR)] 11:20:01

The grant timelinewe just opened the application recently and so the questions that you havemust be submitted by Monday April 20th by 4pm.

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and we'll put our information towards the end with the email address that you can send your questions to.

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And then the application will be due Monday May 4th by 4pm.

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And then our team will review these applications from May

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through August and then you will receive a notification if you received an award in August or September of this year.

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And then the contracts most likely will start in September of 2026.

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And they must be ...

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Whole project must be completed and paid for by June 30th 2027.

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So here are some examples of eligible applicants. we are doing two things this year commercial food

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and non-commercial food entity and so a commercial food entity is a for-profit

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engaged in the production processing distribution sale or service of food including farming fishing food manufacturing wholesaling.

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retail or food service.

[MA Dept of Agricultural Resources (MDAR)] 11:21:20

where food-related activities are conducted primarily for commercial sale or revenue generation.

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And the primary purpose of commercial entities is to sell food to earn income.

[MA Dept of Agricultural Resources (MDAR)] 11:21:30

And then a non-commercial food entity is a non-profit government tribal or community-based organization engaged in food-related activities.

[MA Dept of Agricultural Resources (MDAR)] 11:21:39

Primarily for charitable educational or public service.

[MA Dept of Agricultural Resources (MDAR)] 11:21:43

and for purposes other than profit.

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And so examples of these would be things like food banks food pantries

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non-profit farmsschools healthcare institutions and correctional facilities. So the primary purpose of non-commercial isfood entities is to serve

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the publicor community need.

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And you can see here we have a lot of different applicant types.they could be agricultural

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seafood dealer processor aquaculture

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everything up through grocery stores municipalities and food banks and farmers markets. So it's a very broad range of applicant types.

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your operation must be located and operating within the Commonwealth of Massachusetts.

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And you must be... have been in operation for a minimum of 3 years at the time of the application deadline.

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And also if you are currently working on a project with an FY26 grant if you were awarded last grant cycle

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You must be complete with your project before you can apply for FY27.

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And some have a couple of different project types.

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they kind of focus on all areas of the food system so expansion of agricultural and seafood production

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And local and regional supply chain expansion non-commercial food access and availability

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And commercial food access and availability and food system resilience and emergency preparedness.

[MA Dept of Agricultural Resources (MDAR)] 11:23:18

Now I'll pass it off to Holly to continue.

[MA Dept of Agricultural Resources (MDAR)] 11:23:27

thanks Molly. So now we'll go over the different project types. So if you're applying to this grant you need to select

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One of the five project types that Molly just went over.

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so the first project type is expansion of agriculture and seafood production.

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So the purpose of these projects are to support farms fisheries aquaculture and community-based food production.

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To expand or enhance local food output and supply.

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so some examples of these I'm not going to read through all of the examples. You can find more in the RFR.

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As wellbut some examples are on-farm or on-buscle equipment.

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a season extension structures which will enhance resilience in livestock and poultry biosecurity.

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improvements.

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The next project type is local and regional mid-supply chain expansion.

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So the purpose of these projects are to develop mid-supply chain capacity that connects local producers to Massachusetts consumers.

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An institution and support food system resilience.

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So some examples are value-added processing and packaging facilities.

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cold storage loading docks and food distribution vehicles.

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The next project type is non-commercial food access and availability.

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So these projects develop or enhance programs that increase the consumption.

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of healthy nutritious and preferably local food out of free or reduced cost.

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So this would include emergency food assistance providers food delivery services and institutions providing.

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vulnerable and low-access populations food such as early childhood education centers schools

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elder care facilities hospitals and corrections.

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correctional facilities. some examples are cold storage

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commercial kitchen upgrades

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and facility upgrades.

[MA Dept of Agricultural Resources (MDAR)] 11:25:34

Non-commercial food access and availability. These projects are to develop and enhance programs that increase the consumption

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of locally grown harvested or raised foods through retail outlets.

[MA Dept of Agricultural Resources (MDAR)] 11:25:48

So this can include farm stands farm stores CSAs or small to mid-sized grocery stores.

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Some examples are refrigeration and cold storage or commercial kitchen or prep space upgrades.

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And the last project type is food system resilience and emergency preparedness.

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So these projects increase the resilience of local food systems against disruptions such as power loss

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climate events or supply chain.

[MA Dept of Agricultural Resources (MDAR)] 11:26:20

shocks encourage you to read through the Resilient Mass Plan if you are interested in these project types.

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Some examples are backup power systems or...

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poor or coastal infrastructure.

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So in addition to a project type you will also need to apply under a project.

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track. So there's two project tracks. The first one is Simplified.

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project track. So this is for funding requests.

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That are between \$10000

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to \$150000.

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These are smaller scale lower complexity projects including equipment

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or limited infrastructure improvements that don't require extensive construction.

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The standard project tract is for funding requests between \$151000 to \$500000.

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So these are for larger scale more complex projects including major equipment systems.

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or substantial facility or infrastructure improvements that require more planning coordination

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or technical documentation.

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So the main difference between these two project types is going to be the amount of documentation.

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That is required with your application and I'll talk more about that.

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slides.

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So we're frequently asked questions about the match and we wanted to take some time to explain it.

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the match is based on the project total eligible under the food security infrastructure grant.

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It's a required 20% cash match for all applicants.

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So therefore 80% of the eligible project costs could be funded through FSIG.

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the total project cost must include eligible expenses only.

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And it must be a cash match so no in-kind.

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is accepted.

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here's an example of how the match works.

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So this is a school applying for kitchen equipment

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They're applying for a steamer a kettle a freezer a heated cabinet and the freight.

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So this whole project is eligible under the Food Security Infrastructure.

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Grant and the total project cost is \$66454.

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Of that 66454

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The applicant would be responsible for 20%.

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Which is 13291.

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Therefore their FSIG request would be the remaining 80% which is \$53163.

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So moving into the evaluation criteria applications will be evaluated based on this criteria.

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It's really important because the application and the score sheet directly align with this criteria.

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we'll go through each of these in depth over the next few slides.

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But project need and alignment will account for 30% of the score food security outcomes and impacts will account for 35% of the score.

[MA Dept of Agricultural Resources (MDAR)] 11:29:48

Feasibility will account for 15% of the score.

[MA Dept of Agricultural Resources (MDAR)] 11:29:52

sustainability and maintenance will account for 10% of the score and overall compatibility will account for 10% of the score.

[MA Dept of Agricultural Resources (MDAR)] 11:30:03

So now we'll talk about the information we're asking for in the project need and alignment section of the application.

[MA Dept of Agricultural Resources (MDAR)] 11:30:10

So this is the extent to which the applicant clearly describes their organization and their operation. They identify the problem or the capacity gap.

[MA Dept of Agricultural Resources (MDAR)] 11:30:20

that their proposed project will address.

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And they explain why their proposed project is the right solution.

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So applications should show a clear alignment between the proposed project and the selected project type.

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and describe who will benefit from the project.

[MA Dept of Agricultural Resources (MDAR)] 11:30:38

If applicable our applicants should also describe how the project is incorporating or will allow

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multi-sector collaborations or partnerships and how those will strengthen Massachusetts food system.

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An additional consideration will be given to applicants that have never received FSIC funding in the past.

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For the food security outcomes and impacts section

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We ask applicants to clearly identify two to five expected performance impacts.

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that best align with their proposed project.

[MA Dept of Agricultural Resources (MDAR)] 11:31:16

So in Attachment C of the RFR you'll find a list of these performance impacts.

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that you'll need to select 2 to 5.

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And then describe how your project will achieve each expected outcome measure.

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Within 1 to 3 years of project completion.

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And provide realistic project-appropriate estimated metrics expressed as whole numbers.

[MA Dept of Agricultural Resources (MDAR)] 11:31:42

If applicable applicants may also describe how the project incorporates resilience measures that protect food access during disruptions.

[MA Dept of Agricultural Resources (MDAR)] 11:31:51

and if the project aligns with any of the objectives outlined in the Resilient Mass Plan we ask you to demonstrate that.

[MA Dept of Agricultural Resources (MDAR)] 11:32:02

And then the food security outcomes and impacts continued.

[MA Dept of Agricultural Resources (MDAR)] 11:32:06

We also ask applicants to demonstrate how the project will increase equitable access

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to nutritious food for under-resourced and underserved residents of the Commonwealth.

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So applicants should reference community-level data to document need

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They should describe key characteristics of the population served.

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They should describe how the project will reach the intended population provide evidence of

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the pathway. applicants can also describe if there's any benefits to farmers ranchers or small businesses.

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Within the food supply chain that faced barriers to market access.

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And again please refer to the RFR for the full list of definitions resources and references.

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this is an abridged version.

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Alright so now I'll talk about feasibility.

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So this is the extent to which the project's scope budget

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timeline and implementation plan are realistic and achievable.

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Within the grant period.

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So applications should demonstrate their readiness to implement their project including any permits

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Their capacity to manage the project

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And the financial ability to cover upfront costs and the required match.

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Also the quote should be consistent with the proposed budget and scope.

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For sustainability and maintenance we ask the applicant to demonstrate that the investment will be maintained.

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And continue to provide benefits throughout... beyond the contract period.

[MA Dept of Agricultural Resources (MDAR)] 11:33:46

So applicants should describe who will maintain the equipment or the infrastructure

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how ongoing costs will be covered and how benefits like food access distribution and resilience outcomes will be sustained over time.

[MA Dept of Agricultural Resources (MDAR)] 11:34:02

And then overall compatibility.

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So reviewers will consider the applicant's overall operations.

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alongside the proposed project details.

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Including whether the project's benefits are proportional to the amount requested relative to the organization's size and budget.

[MA Dept of Agricultural Resources (MDAR)] 11:34:20

The reviewers will consider how well the proposed project aligns with the FY27 RFR priorities.

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They'll consider any letters of support that are submitted.

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And for applicants who have received previous FSIG funding reviewers will take past project outcomes and impact into account.

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Okay so now we're going to talk about the docentation that is required recommended and optional.

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so this... this table outlines the documentation for the simplified projects.

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And the standard projects.

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So a budget and quotes is required for...

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all applicants. ...

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If any applicant does not provide a budget or a quote

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their application will not be reviewed.

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In addition to the required budget and quotes

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standard project applicants are required to provide demonstration of project need and feasibility.

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But this is highly recommended for simplified projects as well.

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Demonstration of project benefit to underserved and under-resourced communities.

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letters of support and a letter of a match.

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are optional for simplified projects and highly recommended for standard projects.

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So now we'll talk through the docentation descriptionsand instructions.

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So again the budget should include all of the FSIG project costs.

[MA Dept of Agricultural Resources (MDAR)] 11:36:00

the applicant's cash match and the total amount requested from the program.

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We do provide a budget template in Attachment B.

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of the RFR which you are welcome to use.

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For quotes applicants must submit two quotes for each expenditure or line item in the budget that costs

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\$50000 or more.

[MA Dept of Agricultural Resources (MDAR)] 11:36:23

Applicants must submit one quote for each expenditure or line item in the budget that costs less than \$50000.

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Quotes should be from qualified vendors or contractors and reflect accurate cost estimates. Again those

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the budget and the quotes are required for all applicants and failure to submit

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means that your proposal will not be reviewed.

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Demonstration of project need and...

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Feasibility required for standard projects.

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May include organizational planning and feasibility documents created or updated within the last 3 years.

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that demonstrate the applicant's operational readiness and strategic direction.

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Some examples include a business plan a strategic plan or a SWOT analysis.

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As well as the project feasibility study.

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market analysis or a recent report identifying a gap within the food system.

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Applicants may submit one to three documents for this category.

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Demonstration of project benefit to underserved and under-resourced communities.

[MA Dept of Agricultural Resources (MDAR)] 11:37:31

This can include letters of commitment or MOUs for partners demonstrating planned and specific food security impacts.

[MA Dept of Agricultural Resources (MDAR)] 11:37:39

or supporting documentation that provides contextual or descriptive evidence of need and feasibility.

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So applicants can submit one to three documents for this category.

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And letters of support are non-binding letters of support from partners community organizations or stakeholders.

[MA Dept of Agricultural Resources (MDAR)] 11:37:59

Demonstrating community benefit endorsement or alignment with the project's goals without committing specific resources or actions.

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Applicants may also submit one to three documents for this category.

[MA Dept of Agricultural Resources (MDAR)] 11:38:12

And a letter of a match is a signed letter from an authorized signatory confirming the applicant's cash match commitment.

[MA Dept of Agricultural Resources (MDAR)] 11:38:18

And identifying the funding source.

[MA Dept of Agricultural Resources (MDAR)] 11:38:23

Now we'll talk about the application submission.

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So the application must be submitted through the online portal. The link is on the FSIG webpage.

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We do provide a copy of the application in Attachment A of the RFR so you can see the questions ahead of time but again it has to be

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submitted online through that portal.

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we can't accept hard copies or emails.

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Please make sure to allow adequate time for your submission. Consider any potential delays.

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That may come up. All attachments must be PDF or Word docents.

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If an applicant applies to multiple MJAR programs for the same project the department reserves the right

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To determine which program if any the project will be funded through.

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Only one application can be submitted per operation.

[MA Dept of Agricultural Resources (MDAR)] 11:39:21

Entities or individuals that own multiple businesses.

[MA Dept of Agricultural Resources (MDAR)] 11:39:26

cannot submit applications for each business.

[MA Dept of Agricultural Resources (MDAR)] 11:39:29

And the application is due by 4pm on Monday May 4th 2026.

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Applications submitted after the deadline even seconds after won't be considered.

[MA Dept of Agricultural Resources (MDAR)] 11:39:41

So please again consider any delays that could prevent you from submitting on time.

[MA Dept of Agricultural Resources (MDAR)] 11:39:49

And then we wanted to give some insight into our review process.

[MA Dept of Agricultural Resources (MDAR)] 11:39:54

So there will be 3 rounds of review following the grant application.

[MA Dept of Agricultural Resources (MDAR)] 11:40:00

Submission. First is the eligibility and administrative review. So this is when our team will look through all the applications to make sure

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that the organization or the project is eligible.

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for funding. We'll make sure that the application has been completed and the required documents have been

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submitted and we'll check for any past compliance issues.

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Applications that pass that first round of review will go into the technical review.

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And that's when the applications will be scored based on the evaluation criteria.

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That we talked about earlier.

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if the application is likely to be funded we may request a site visit if additional verification is required.

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note that a site visit does not guarantee funding and that is something that we will reach out to the applicant and schedule.

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So post-award there are certain project terms and deliverables.

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Applicants selected to receive an award will be subject to project terms and required to enter into a legally binding agreement.

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with the Commonwealth. we don't have time to go over all of these project terms and deliverables but encourage you to read through sections.

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5 and 6 of the RFFR for information about contracting reporting

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and reimbursements before submitting your application so you know what the expectations are.

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All right so if you have any questions or require some support you can email us. Our email is listed.

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Here again the deadline for questions is 4pm on Monday April 20th.

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note that we can't...

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take phone calls or do meetings to provide any feedback on the project.

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You need to submit your questions in writing and all of the questions will be public record.

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And will be posted on our webpage in a Q&A document.

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the Q&A document will be periodically updated so that all applicants can review questions and answers.

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And then I just have to say that MDAR cannot assist in the preparation of grant applications.

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In order to maintain the integrity of a competitive grant process we can't advise or provide individuals with any information.

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Regarding specific applications during the solicitation process.

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And just want to note too we have some resources on our webpage.

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We have the link to the RFR which also includes the copy of the application which is Attachment A.

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the budget template which is attachment B and the expected performance outcomes and metrics.

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Which is attachment C.

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We'll have our Q&A docent that I just spoke about.

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we'll have this webinar recording and we'll also post the slides.

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And then we also have a baseline eligibility tool.

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And again here is the link.

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to the webpage.

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All right thank you so much for your interest in the program.