FEED NJ
Frequently Asked Questions

This Food Equity and Economic Development in NJ (FEED NJ) Frequently Asked Questions resource is intended to help anyone interested in this program to better understand how the program works. This includes, but is not limited to potential applicants, state and local government officials, community members, community organizations, and other interested members of the public.

The questions and answers included here reflect the major features of the program, as well as questions NJEDA program staff commonly receive from the public.

This FAQ resource will be updated over time as additional questions emerge. Your contributions will help make this resource more useful. Please send any additional questions or comments to NJEDA staff at foodsecuritygrants@njeda.gov.

Program Basics

1. **What is the New Jersey Economic Development Authority (NJEDA or the Authority)?**
   The NJEDA is the State's principal agency for driving economic growth, working to carry out Governor Phil Murphy's vision for a stronger and fairer economy. The NJEDA is committed to making New Jersey a national model for inclusive and sustainable economic development by focusing on key strategies to help build strong and dynamic communities, create good jobs for New Jersey residents, and foster innovation.

2. **What is the Food Equity and Economic Development in New Jersey (FEED NJ) Pilot Program?**
   FEED NJ is a $30 million pilot program awarding grants between $50,000 and $500,000 for innovative projects that strengthen food access and food security in New Jersey's most acute food desert communities (FDCs). Additional information is available at www.njeda.gov/feednj.

3. **What locations are eligible for this program?**
   FEED NJ focuses on 14 of New Jersey's top 15 FDCs, excluding Atlantic City/Ventnor (which was the sole focus of NJEDA's Atlantic City Food Security Grants Pilot Program). To target resources to the most acute FDCs in New Jersey, this program will only support projects that propose to primarily serve residents of one or more of these 14 Primary Focus FDCs. These FDCs are:

Rank	Food Desert Name
1	North, Central and South Camden/Woodlynne
3	Newark South
4	Newark West
5	Camden East/Pennsauken
6	Trenton West

7	Newark North and Central
8	Newark East
9	Salem city
10	Passaic city
11	Trenton East
12	Bridgeton/Fairfield Twp/Lawrence Twp
13	Paterson South
14	New Brunswick city
15	Paterson North

Applicants may also elect to serve additional FDCs, provided the primary focus remains on at least one of these 14 FDCs.

Because FDCs are designated at the block-group level, the boundaries of an FDC generally do not include an entire municipality. The boundaries of Primary Focus FDCs can be seen in this interactive map available on EDA's website. Click the checkbox marked "FEED NJ - Food Desert Communities."

4. **How and why were these locations selected for this pilot program?**
The Food Desert Relief Act directed NJEDA to work with the Departments of Community Affairs and Agriculture to develop a methodology to designate up to 50 Food Desert Communities (FDCs) across New Jersey. NJEDA's Board approved the methodology and the 50 designated FDCs in February 2022. The 14 Primary Focus FDCs have composite food desert factor scores of 63.9 and above, indicating significant need.

5. **How much funding is available as part of the FEED NJ Program?**
Up to $30 million in total funding is available. Applicants may request a grant amount from a minimum of $50,000 to a maximum of $500,000.

6. **Where is the funding coming from?**
Funding for FEED NJ comes from proceeds of NJEDA's Food Desert Relief Tax Credit Auction, which sold tax credits to eligible New Jersey corporations. This auction was authorized by the Food Desert Relief Act of 2021, which stated that proceeds must be used to fund programs to alleviate food deserts and support food security initiatives in FDCs.

7. **How many grants will be awarded?**
Up to $30 million in funding is available and will be awarded on a competitive, individual-project basis. We anticipate that the total number of grants could be between 60 and 100.

8. **Is this a grant or a tax credit?**
This is a grant program, not a tax credit. NJEDA also offers the Food Desert Relief Supermarket Tax Credit Program, aimed at supporting the development and operations of supermarkets across all 50 designated Food Desert Communities.

Project Eligibility

9. **What types of projects are eligible to receive grant funding?**
   Grant funding will be awarded only to applicants that indicate that they will use the grant funds for projects to improve food access and/or food security that primarily serve residents in one or more of the 14 Primary Focus FDCs.

   This may be accomplished in a number of ways. The below is a non-exhaustive list of potential projects to inspire creativity among potential applicants. Applicants may propose projects not captured by this list of examples.
   - Establishing, enhancing and/or operating a mobile market, food pantry, or food co-op
   - Purchasing equipment, such as cold storage equipment or other kitchen appliances, for small retailers, community-based organizations, food banks, health care providers and/or emergency food providers
   - Technical assistance and/or equipment to increase opportunities for residents to utilize nutrition benefits (e.g. Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program, Special Supplemental Nutrition Program for Women, Infants, and Children, Senior Farmers Market Nutrition Program, etc.), such as at farmers markets, small or mid-sized food retailers, or through digital literacy training, case management, and/or assistance with online grocery ordering; this may also include the cost of purchasing and installing a refrigerated delivery locker, excluding any such costs covered via the NJEDA FRIDG program
   - Increasing access to locally grown produce, including but not limited to expanding operation of a farmers' market, establishing a Community Supported Agriculture program, establishing or strengthening relationships between farmers and retailers, or establishing or expanding produce delivery
   - Expanding services that provide food at no cost to residents in need, such as meal delivery to homebound residents, including increased operating costs associated with that expansion
   - Accelerating existing planning and implementation efforts, such as the next steps of an NJEDA Food Security Planning Grant, to broaden food access opportunities

10. **Can applicants propose projects not listed above?**
    Yes. Applicants may propose projects not captured by the above list of examples. The proposed project must strengthen food access and food security for residents of the selected FDC(s).

11. **What does it mean to "primarily serve" an FDC?**
    Applicants must propose projects that focus on alleviating hunger for residents of at least one of the 14 Primary Focus FDCs. Applicants may elect to also serve residents of other NJEDA designated FDCs.

12. **What does NJEDA mean by "food security"?**
    NJEDA will use the definition of "food security" offered by the New Jersey Office of the Food Security Advocate: "Food security exists when all people, at all times, have physical, social, and

economic access to sufficient, safe, and nutritious food which meets their dietary needs and food preferences for an active and healthy life."

13. **If the project involves providing food, are there minimum nutrition requirements that must be met?**
No. Applicants should make reasonable best efforts to provide nutritious, fresh, and affordable food when possible.

14. **Are revenue-generating projects eligible for this program, for example, a corner store, farmers' market, or workshop series with paid entry?**
Yes. Revenue-generating projects are eligible, so long as the budget submitted as part of the application indicates that income as one of the other funding sources for the project.

15. **Does the proposed project have to be located in a Food Desert Community?**
Proposed projects are not required to be physically located in a Food Desert Community. However, all projects must improve food access and/or food security primarily for residents of at least one of the 14 Primary Focus FDCs.

Proposals will be scored based on criteria including the applicant's depth of experience serving the target population in the selected FDC(s) and the project's expected impact on food access/food security for residents of the selected primary FDC(s).

16. **Can proposed projects also serve people from outside the eligible FDCs?**
Proposed projects must primarily serve residents of one or more of the 14 Primary Focus FDCs. Applicants may also elect to serve additional NJEDA-designated FDCs, provided the primary focus remains on at least one of these 14 FDCs.

17. **How can I determine the boundaries of the Primary Focus FDCs?**
The boundaries of Primary Focus FDCs can be seen in this interactive map available on EDA's website. Click the checkbox marked "FEED NJ - Food Desert Communities."

18. **Do proposed projects have to be new, or can grant funding be used to sustain pre-existing initiatives/operations?**
Grant funding can be used to sustain both new and pre-existing initiatives, provided all other criteria are met.

19. **Can grant funds be used to support existing project planning, or projects currently in development?**
Yes. Funding may be used to accelerate existing planning and implementation efforts to strengthen food access opportunities.

Please note, the grant award can be used to cover only costs beginning from execution of the grant agreement. Costs incurred prior to grant execution may not be included in the project budget.

20. **Are projects required to be completed by a certain date?**
Applicants can propose to complete their projects within either 12 or 24 months of execution of the grant agreement. The proposed funding use(s) must be accomplished within the selected grant term. Grantees may be granted a one time 6-month extension by EDA staff if the grantee is diligently pursuing completion of the project and the delay was unforeseeable and not in the grantee's control.

21. **Can grant funding be used to cover costs associated with equipment, installation, salaries, and fringe, and/or rent?**
Yes. Equipment, installation, salaries, and fringe, and/or rent are all eligible uses of funding, subject to the Authority's approval of the project, project budget, and supporting documentation.

22. **Can grant funding be used to cover costs associated with construction or renovation?**
There are limits on the use of grant funding for construction or renovation. Minor renovation is an eligible use of funding, subject to the Authority's approval of the project budget and supporting documentation.

    Ground-up construction and major renovations (e.g. construction of an additional floor or an addition to the building footprint) are *not* permitted. Grant funding also cannot be used toward fines incurred because of code or zoning violations.

23. **Will prevailing wage requirements apply for construction?**
Yes. All contractors used for any construction costs more than $1999 must be registered as a New Jersey Department of Labor and Workforce Development (DOL) Public Works Contractor Registered Contractor and must abide by NJ prevailing wage and affirmative action requirements.

24. **Why do public works registered contractors have to be used?**
By law, all contractors through this program must be Public Works contractors registered with the NJ Department of Labor. At a high level, this law guarantees that all workers who provide hands-on labor for a public works project will be paid prevailing wage. As a result, even if you have worked with a different contractor in the past, they must be a public works contractor/subcontractor, or you will be unable to work with them on this project.

25. **What requirements is my contractor(s) subject to on this project?**
Contractors must be registered as a New Jersey Department of Labor and Workforce Development (DOL) Public Works Contractor. More about Public Works Registered Contractors can be found [here](#).
    - Contractors and their subcontractors must register at SAM.GOV and are subject to a debarment check
    - Contractors must agree to pay prevailing wage, which is set by county and by construction trade

- Contractors with 4 or more total employees must abide by affirmative action requirements
- Contractors must only hire subcontractors that are also Public Works Registered Contractors

NJEDA reserves the right to also conduct site visits during construction to confirm that work is being completed in accordance with eligible uses for the Program, federal guidelines, and all prevailing wage and affirmative action requirements.

26. **Can grant funding be used to acquire land or buildings?**
No. Acquisition of land or buildings is not an eligible cost.

27. **Do I have to pay back any of the grant?**
No. Grant funding does not have to be repaid, unless the grantee defaults on the grant agreement.

Applicant Eligibility

28. **Who is eligible to apply for the grant program?**
Grants will be awarded only to entities that meet the following criteria:
- Applicant is a for-profit or nonprofit entity that has been in existence for at least two years at the time of application
- Applicant is in good standing with the NJ Department of Labor and Workforce Development and the NJ Department of Environmental Protection
- Applicant is registered to do business in New Jersey and in substantial good standing with the NJ Division of Taxation, as evidenced by a current Tax Clearance Certificate
- For projects involving construction, applicant must provide evidence of site control or a path to site control at the time of application

29. **Does the applicant have to be headquartered/incorporated in a Food Desert Community?**
No. However, the proposed project must primarily serve residents of one or more of the 14 Primary Focus FDCs.

30. **My organization has been in existence for less than two years. Are we eligible to apply?**
No. Applicants must have been in existence for at least two years at the time of application submission, as evidenced by formation documents.

31. **Can applicants collaborate with other entities?**
Applicants may propose collaborating with other entities. If any other entity will incur expenses as part of the proposed project, those expenses and that entity's role must be described in the application. NJEDA will disburse grant funds only to the primary applicant entity directly and will not permit a joint venture.

32. **Can private individuals apply for FEED NJ?**

No. Applicants must be a for-profit or nonprofit that has been in existence for at least two years at the time of application.

33. **Can government entities apply for FEED NJ?**
No. Municipalities and other government agencies are not eligible for this grant opportunity. Applicants must be a for-profit or nonprofit that has been in existence for at least two years at the time of application.

34. **Can joint ventures apply for FEED NJ?**
No. Joint ventures are not eligible for this grant opportunity.

35. **Can restaurants, corner stores, and/or grocery stores apply for this program?**
Yes. Entities engaged in food retail or distribution are eligible for the program, provided they meet all other criteria. Projects involving food retail will be evaluated in part on the applicant's experience serving recipients of federal and state nutrition benefits, including SNAP and WIC.

Application Process

36. **When will the application open?**
The application is currently under development. Please visit www.njeda.gov/feednj for updates and to sign up to receive program announcements. The application will be available at www.njeda.gov/feednj.

37. **What is the deadline for applications?**
The application is currently under development. Once open, the FEED NJ application will remain open for six weeks.

38. **Is this a first-come, first-served program?**
No, this is not a first-come, first-served program. All applications submitted by the deadline will be reviewed after the application period has ended.

39. **Is there an application fee?**
No. There are no fees for this program.

40. **What information is required in the application?**
Entities must provide to NJEDA information about their organization and their proposed project, including but not limited to:

- A description of the applicant's mission and capacity to undertake the proposed project, including current and past experience:
  - Serving residents of the selected FDC(s)
  - Providing programming or services related to food access and food security
  - Successfully executing projects similar in scale and budget
  - Serving the target population or other populations with similar attributes

- As applicable, serving recipients of federal and state nutrition benefits and/or working on multi-stakeholder projects
- Identification of specific Primary Focus FDC(s) the proposed project will primarily serve, as well as any additional FDCs
- Compelling, detailed description of the proposed project, including its expected impact on food access and/or food security for residents of the selected FDC(s)
    - Overall project goals
    - Connection between project and existing food access needs and challenges in selected FDC(s)
    - Demonstration that the project's primary focus and impact will be for residents of the selected FDC(s)
    - Description of the role of each proposed collaborator, including the scope of their contribution and a justification for their participation
- A work plan, which must include at minimum:
    - Specific Measurable Achievable Relevant Time-bound (SMART) objectives
    - Description of each project activity, including estimates of resources needed and allocated
    - A project timeline, including milestones and the length of time needed to implement each activity within the grant period
    - Identification of appropriate staff responsible for each project activity
    - If collaborating or partnering with other entities to achieve the goals and objectives proposed in the application: name, scope of work and justification for any planned collaborators
- A justification of the proposed project's viability and long-term sustainability, including details about ongoing/previous planning, existing applicant capabilities, potential risks/contingencies, and how the proposed project will continue to achieve the desired outcomes during and after the end of the grant term.
    - For projects involving construction, evidence of site control or a path to site control must be provided at the time of application
    - If applicable, evidence of commitment from project collaborators and/or key stakeholders must also be submitted
- A description of ongoing and planned community engagement efforts, including details about efforts to seek and respond to feedback from stakeholders, as well as to consider and mitigate past obstacles to community food security
    - At least one letter of support from an entity that serves at least one of the selected Primary Focus FDC(s) is required. If an applicant proposes serving multiple FDCs, multiple letters may be submitted to demonstrate engagement with entities serving those communities.
- A line-item budget and budget narrative, which must include at minimum:
    - The requested level of funding broken down by line item and clearly explained
    - Description, evidence, and status of outside funds, if the total project cost exceeds the requested grant amount
    - Amount, description, and rationale for funding allocated to any planned collaborator entities

A sample application will be available at www.njeda.gov/feednj.

41. **My project includes construction. What information will I need to provide in the application?**
For each contractor/subcontractor used, applicants will be asked to provide the following information:
- Name of contractor
- Contractor quote
- Public Works Certificate
- NJ Business Registration Certificate
- Contractor Eligibility Verification Form
- NJ Small/Women/Minority/Veteran Business Enterprise (SWMBE) certification, if applicable
- Square footage of proposed construction site
- A detailed explanation of the proposed construction and any specialized equipment or materials required, if applicable

All contractors used for any construction costs more than $1,999 must be registered as a New Jersey Department of Labor and Workforce Development (DOL) Public Works Contractor Registered Contractor and must abide by NJ prevailing wage and affirmative action requirements.

For each professional service used, including, but not limited to, architectural, engineering, and construction management services, applicants will be asked to provide the following information.
- Name of professional service company
- NJ Business Registration Certificate
- Professional Services Eligibility Verification Form
- NJ Small/Women/Minority/Veteran Business Enterprise (SWMBE) certification, if applicable

42. **What documents are needed at the time of application?**
Applicants must submit a work plan, project budget, and budget narrative using the templates provided at www.njeda.gov/feednj. Applicants must also submit their formation documents and New Jersey Tax Clearance Certificate. At least one Letter of Support from an entity that serves at least one of the selected Primary Focus FDC(s) is also required. Additional project-specific documents include evidence of commitment from project collaborators (if applicable), evidence of engagement with key project stakeholders, and evidence of site control or a path to site control.

If the project involves construction, the applicant must provide a NJ Business Registration Certificate, Public Works Certificate, Contractor Eligibility Verification Form, and NJ SWMBE certification (if applicable) for each contractor used, as well as a NJ Business Registration Form,

Professional Services Eligibility Verification Form, and NJ SWMBE certification (if applicable) for each professional service used.

43. **I speak a language other than English; can I receive a translated version of the application?**
For language assistance, please send your name, spoken language, and telephone number to NJEDA at languagehelp@njeda.gov to receive assistance completing the application.

44. **How long will it take for applications to be reviewed? When can I expect a decision?**
Grants will be disbursed on a competitive basis, and all scoring must be complete before awards can be announced. NJEDA will reach out to applicants to share an updated timeline.

45. **Can my organization submit multiple applications?**
Applicants are limited to one application per EIN.

46. **What happens if I forgot to submit a document or submitted something wrong? Will I have a chance to fix it?**
Applicants should make their best efforts to ensure that their submitted application includes all required information. Applications will first be evaluated for completeness and eligibility. Applicants that are missing required information will be provided an opportunity to cure those deficiencies before a final completeness and eligibility review. Any applications still incomplete after the 15-business day cure period will be rejected, with no opportunity to appeal.

47. **What resources are available to support applicants?**
Beyond this FAQ document, applicants can visit www.njeda.gov/feednj to find additional resources including a sample application, application checklist, scoring rubric, and program specifications.

Grant Awards and Usage

48. **How will grantees be selected?**
All complete applications will be scored by an internal NJEDA scoring committee based on the rubric identified in the program specifications approved by the Authority's board, available at www.njeda.gov/feednj. Applications must score at least 70 points out of 100 points, including a minimum of 8 points in the Strength of Budget and Budget Narrative criterion, to be considered for an award.

Funding will be allocated first to the highest-scored applicant, proceeding in decreasing order of score to other applicants that meet the minimum score requirements, until insufficient funds remain to fully fund the next eligible application.

49. **What criteria will be used to score applicants?**
Applications will be evaluated on the following criteria:
- Organizational Capacity (up to 20 points)
- Project Impact (up to 20 points)
- Work Plan Quality (up to 15 points)

- Project Viability and Sustainability (up to 15 points)
- Community Engagement (up to 15 points)
- Strength of Budget and Budget Narrative (up to 15 points, 8 point minimum required to be eligible to be awarded funding)

The complete scoring criteria are available at www.njeda.gov/feednj.

The highest scoring applications (above 70 points) will be recommended for award until all funds are exhausted.

50. **Can grants be used to cover costs incurred after the date of grant agreement execution?**
Yes. All other costs that are incurred after the date of grant agreement execution are eligible, subject to the Authority's approval of the project budget and supporting documentation. For example, costs can include minor renovation, equipment, installation, salaries and fringe, and rent.

51. **Can grants be used to cover the entirety of project costs?**
Yes. Grant funds may cover up to 100 percent of the proposed project costs.

52. **Can funds be sub-granted to other entities?**
No. Grant funds cannot be sub-granted.

53. **Can FEED NJ grants be used in conjunction with additional funding?**
Yes. If the total cost of the proposed project exceeds the grant amount requested from NJEDA, additional funding sources must be described in the budget and budget narrative submitted for approval.

Project Implementation

54. **How will grant funding be disbursed?**
Selected applicants will enter into a grant agreement with NJEDA, and funds will be disbursed according to the following schedule:
- 30% of the grant will be disbursed upon execution of a grant agreement between NJEDA and the selected applicant;
- Once the applicant's quarterly expenditure reports demonstrate that the initial disbursement has been spent on eligible costs, further expenditures on eligible costs will be reimbursed on a quarterly basis, up to a maximum of 50% of the grant amount, upon the Authority's review and approval of the applicant's quarterly expenditure reports; and
- Up to 20% of the grant amount will be disbursed upon the Authority's review and approval of the applicant's final progress and expenditure reports.

55. **Will additional funding be made available to support projects?**

No. This is a one-time grant. However, the results of this pilot program may inform future NJEDA program development. NJEDA currently offers a variety of other grant and tax credit programs aimed at supporting food security in New Jersey. Learn more [here](#).

56. **What reporting will be required and at what frequency?**
Grantees will be required to provide progress and expenditure reports to NJEDA quarterly, starting at grant execution and extending through the end of the grant term of either 12 or 24 months. At the end of the grant term, these quarterly reports will be replaced by final progress and expenditure reports. These reports must provide updates on grantees' progress against their proposed project timeline, data on the project's outcomes and impact (e.g. number of people served), and project costs since the last report.

Other Questions

57. **Will NJEDA offer this program in other food desert communities?**
FEED NJ is a pilot program that aims to support projects in 14 of New Jersey's most acute FDCs. FEED NJ aims to build on the success of the [Atlantic City Food Security Grants Pilot Program](#), which awarded 11 grants to support food security and food access projects that serve the Atlantic City/Ventnor FDC.

NJEDA currently offers other programs available to all 50 designated Food Desert Communities, including the [Food Desert Relief Supermarket Tax Credit Program](#), aimed at supporting the development and operations of supermarkets in FDCs, and the [Food Retail Innovation in Delivery Grant (FRIDG) Program](#), which provides grant funding to New Jersey food retailers to purchase self-contained, temperature-controlled lockers located in FDCs.

58. **Who do I contact for additional questions?**
Potential applicants may reach out to CustomerCare@njeda.gov, call (844) 965-1125, or use the Customer Care chat feature found on the NJEDA website. Additional questions, comments, and inquiries can also be directed to foodsecuritygrants@njeda.gov.

59. **How can I stay updated about FEED NJ?**
Please visit www.njeda.gov/feednj to sign up to join our email list and receive the latest program announcements and updates.

60. **Will there be any information sessions or webinars for FEED NJ?**
An informational webinar will be held at a to-be-determined date and will be announced in advance at www.njeda.gov/events and in a message to our email list. The webinar recording and slides will be made available at www.njeda.gov/feednj.