

2024 Micro Grants for Food Security Program



Fiscal Year 2023 Request for Applications (RFA)

Alaska’s Division of Agriculture requests applications for the next available funding cycle of the Micro Grants for Food Security Program. This grant program is funded by the U.S. Department of Agriculture (USDA), Agricultural Marketing Service (AMS), to increase the quantity of locally grown food products in food-insecure communities in Alaska through small-scale projects such as gardening, herding, and livestock operations.

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TIMELINE

September 27, 2024: Release Micro Grant for Food Security Request for Applications (RFA)
November 26, 2024: Micro Grant applications due by 5pm
December 2, 2024 – January 15, 2025: Applications reviewed and scored by review committee
January 15-30, 2025: Division meets to select applications for funding based on review committee scoring and program eligibility
February 1-28, 2025: Selected applications sent to USDA for review and final approval
March 2025: Announcement made to applicants selected for approved projects
March 1-31, 2025: Division grants team works with approved applicants to contract for funding
April 1, 2025- March 31, 2026: Tentative Period of Performance for subgrantees

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All applications are to be submitted electronically via the Division’s application system, [SmartSimple](#). Please ensure you have appropriate updated electronic devices (such as a tablet, iPad, laptop, or computer. Cellphones do not always provide the appropriate Microsoft office products like Word, PDF, etc.) to submit the applications and oversight of the project you are applying for. (I.E. Final Report submittal, Picture upload, Reimbursement Requests.)

PROGRAM OVERVIEW

In cooperation with the U.S. Department of Agriculture (USDA), Agricultural Marketing Service (AMS), the Alaska Department of Natural Resources, Division of Agriculture (hereafter referred to as “the Division”) will distribute Micro Grant for Food Security Program (MGFSP) grant funds

over the next year, to improve access and secure adequate food availability for Alaska.

The purpose of the MGFSP is to improve available and affordable food to Alaskans, with a priority to those furthest from reliable food sources and those areas that have challenges accessing food products. These grants will be available for a one-year term. The maximum amount for each Micro-Grant awarded is \$5,000 per individual and \$10,000 per qualifying organization. A ten (10) percent cost match will be required for each organization approved grant. The maximum award amount for individuals will depend on the fixed amount- project type selected.

The Division has \$2.6 Million available to award during this application cycle to eligible applicants for project activities. The Division will award multiple grant projects, subject to available funding. Qualifying activities may include, but are not limited to, small-scale gardening, greenhouse, small- scale fencing and livestock operations, and other activities which expand access to food such as food processing and storage.

Applications for the MGFSP must demonstrate both economic need and show how the project impacts and alleviates food insecurity in Alaska in its “Project Details” description. Applications will be awarded on a competitive basis. The competition will follow the Division’s policies and procedures; as well as USDA [AMS General Terms and Conditions](#).

ELIGIBILITY

Eligible applicants must be physically located in Alaska and must apply directly to the Division of Agriculture.

Eligible entities are defined as:

1. Individuals
2. Indian tribes or tribal organizations
3. Nonprofit organizations that are engaged in increasing food security, including:
 - A. Religious organizations
 - B. Food banks
 - C. Food pantries
4. Federally funded educational facilities, including:
 - A. Head Start programs or an Early Head Start program
 - B. Public elementary schools or public secondary schools
 - C. Public institutions of higher education
 - D. Tribal Colleges or Universities
 - E. Job training programs
5. Local or Tribal governments that may not levy local taxes under State or Federal law.

Eligible applicants must engage in activities within Alaska, that will increase the quantity and quality of locally grown food for food insecure individuals, families, neighborhoods, and communities.

The purpose of the MGFSP is to secure food for families and communities. Activities to create or expand avenues for the sale of food commodities, specialty crops, and meats are not a project type currently being offered by the Division. Project descriptions that include the selling of food grown within the project will be considered an ineligible project activity. Applicants must select only one project and keep the project description within the selected project.

PROJECTS

Applicants will be able to select one of the following project types:

1. **Small- Scale Gardening:** Purchasing gardening tools or equipment, soil, soil amendments, seeds, plants, animals and other necessary items to grow and store food.
An eligible applicant may:
 - A. Use funds to purchase gardening tools or equipment, soil, soil amendments, seeds, plants or other items necessary to grow and store food.
 - B. Use funds for the purchase or assembly of composting units and towers designed to grow leafy greens. Includes activities associated with extending the growing season, as well as starting or expanding hydroponic and aeroponic farming.
 - C. Shipping is included.
2. **Small Scale Livestock, Poultry, Fencing, and Apiary:** Building, buying, erecting, or repairing fencing for livestock or other activities related to the raising of livestock.
An eligible applicant may:
 - A. Use funds to purchase animals as well as buy, erect, or repair fencing.
 - B. Use funds to build production animal housing/ shelters such as chicken coops or purchase a prefabricated coop.
 - C. Use funds to purchase hives and related bee keeping supplies.
 - D. Shipping is included.
3. **Food Storage and Processing:** In Alaska this includes harvesting wild plants, vegetables, fruits, and animals. Increasing food security Canning/Processing- smokehouses and racks, vacuum packaging equipment and supplies.
An eligible applicant may:
 - A. Use funds to purchase Pressure cookers, jars/lids, meat grinders, hanging racks, refrigerators/freezers, cold storage, dehydrators, juicers, presses, pasteurization,

root cellars, canning equipment, and other necessary items to process and store food.

B. Shipping is included.

4. **Greenhouse:** Building, buying, erecting, or repairing a Greenhouse to extend the growing season. The greenhouse must meet the definition of a climate-controlled structure enclosed and used to extend the growing season of cultivated plants and be weather resistant. Greenhouses that are not considered weather-resistant will be reclassified under a gardening project.

An eligible applicant may:

- A. Use funds to purchase a greenhouse kit to assemble.
- B. Use funds to purchase supplies to construct a greenhouse such as: lumber, screws, bolts, nuts, hammers, saws, measuring tapes, eyewear protection, pencils, various construction protective wear such as hard hats, gloves, tool belts, vis queen, vinyl siding, fans, concrete mix, and brackets.

Grant funds may not be used to purchase food, food ingredients, guns, firearms, ammunition, shells, powder, reloading equipment, anything pertaining to or associated with guns or firearms per the U.S. Department of Agriculture.

Reporting requirements will consist of the submittal of a final report, a disbursement request form with applicable backup documentation (receipts), and a photograph as evidence of the purchase of the materials.

All purchases made with MGFSP funds are required to follow the Federal Cost Principles of [Subpart E- Cost Principles of 2 CFR 200](#) and the [AMS General Terms and Conditions](#). **Purchases made with MGFSP funds that are determined to be unallowable per 2 CFR 200 and the AMS General Terms and Conditions may result in the grant award being reduced by the unallowable cost. Any unallowable purchases made with advance funds received from the MGFSP will be required to be paid back to the State.**

AWARD AMOUNTS:

Individuals may receive a fixed amount award dependent on the project type selected:

- Small Scale Gardening: \$2500
- Livestock, Poultry, Fencing, and Apiary: \$5000
- Food Processing and Storage: \$5000
- Greenhouse: \$5000

PRIORITY CONSIDERATION

Micro grant awards to eligible applicants will be given priority if they:

1. Have not previously received a subaward under this program.
2. Are located in the highest food insecure areas, determined by the census area the project is located in using data from Feeding America's 2022 Map the Meal Gap: <https://map.feedingamerica.org/county/2022/overall/alaska>.

Further, prioritizing criteria to be considered includes:

1. Ability to describe benefit to food security.
2. Appropriateness of the project for the direct and indirect beneficiaries.
3. Appropriateness of the project for the area.
4. Ability to complete the project in a one-year timeframe.
5. Ability to measure results and complete the reporting requirements as determined by the MGFSP statute.

ADDITIONAL PROVISIONS

Each project must identify at least one expected measurable outcome that specifically demonstrates the project's impact in increasing food security, such as pounds of food that will be produced as a result of the project.

DISTRIBUTION OF FUNDS

Distribution of awarded funds will occur after grant contracts are awarded.

For Individuals: Funds will be paid to the Grantee in up to two payments, one advance and one final payment upon review and approval of the final report, reimbursement request with appropriate backup documentation accompanied, and picture provided of the project. The Division may request additional pictures.

For Organizations: An advance payment must be requested from the Project Coordinator upon final signature of the grant agreement. Final payment will be processed upon review and approval of the final report, reimbursement request with appropriate backup documentation accompanied, and picture provided of the project. The Division may request additional pictures.

RFA APPLICATION INSTRUCTIONS

The application is an online format via the divisions granting system, SmartSimple, and will be completed and submitted online:

Applicants must complete all fields, including but not limited to their Name, Business or Organization, Mailing Address, Project address, Phone Number, and Email Address. Applicants must provide a full description of their proposed grant project with a limit of **100** words with the requested amount of funds being applied for. Applicants must be in good standing with the State of Alaska.

Applications must be submitted electronically via the Alaska Division of Agriculture SmartSimple [Application Portal](#).

The Division will not accept applications that are printed and mailed in or emailed.

The application for the 2024 Micro Grants for Food Security opens on Friday, September 27, 2024, and will close on Tuesday, November 26, 2024, at 5pm.

RFA REVIEW PROCESS

Each MGFSP application received is reviewed by a member of the Division's review committee which uses set scoring criteria to evaluate how well the project details address the MGFSP requirements and funding priorities. Applicants are ranked based on the information provided in the application and cannot provide updated information after the application is submitted. The scoring criteria are outlined below. MGFSP applications that are selected by the Division for funding must then be submitted to USDA for final review and approval.

SCORING CRITERIA

Micro Grant Objectives:

Prescore: can receive up to 55 points

1. The proposed project has not previously received a micro grant: 10 points
2. The proposed project is within the census areas of most challenging concerning food security: 1-30 points
3. The proposed project responded to the need of Direct beneficiaries of those living in the household to benefit: 10 points
4. The proposed project responded to the need of Indirect beneficiaries of partnerships with other groups, churches, neighbors, and food banks: 5 points

Reviewer score: can receive up to 45 points

1. Project and reported beneficiaries reasonable given census area: 10 points
2. Description of project reasonable to improve food security: max 10 points
3. Number of Direct beneficiaries appropriate given project type: max 10 points

4. Does project description provide explanation of how it'll increase food security for direct and indirect beneficiaries: 10 points
5. Number of Indirect beneficiaries appropriate given project type: max 5 points

All completed RFA applications will be scored; and the applications who have the highest scores (and fall within funding limits) will be considered for an award, contingent upon Division staff review and USDA approval.

The Division will make best efforts to notify those applicants that have been awarded via email from the SmartSimple granting system around the mid-winter timeframe. This is a tentative timeframe should the application, review, and approval process all fall within the set tentative timeframe.