



*Northeast*  
FOOD FOR SCHOOLS



2023-2024  
INSTRUCTION  
MANUAL

# WELCOME

Congratulations on your award of Northeast Food for Schools funding for SY 2023-24! You are one of over 240 school districts around Massachusetts who applied for these USDA funds through DESE's Office of Food and Nutrition Programs.

This is a comprehensive manual designed to provide you with the resources, content, and contact information for Northeast Food for Schools participation.

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Please know we are here to support you in planning, spending and requesting reimbursement for your NFS purchases. Thank you for your work in strengthening the our regional food system and ensuring that your students access nourishing local foods at school!

Sincerely,

Abby Getman Skillicorn & Megan Perry  
Massachusetts Farm to School

Maggie Nowak  
Massachusetts Dept. of Elementary &  
Secondary Education

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*Northeast Food for Schools is a United States Department of Agriculture program administered by the Massachusetts Department of Elementary and Secondary Education in partnership with Massachusetts Farm to School.*



# USDA PRIORITY GOALS

## *USDA Northeast Food for Schools Priority Goals: Increase school food sales of local foods from socially disadvantaged farmers & producers.*

The goal of this program is to increase the purchasing of local foods for school meal programs, with a special emphasis for school food authorities to source from socially disadvantaged farmers and producers (BIPOC, women-owned, etc.) and small businesses.

USDA's full definition of socially disadvantaged farmers/producers: A Socially Disadvantaged Farmer or Rancher is a farmer or rancher who is a member of a Socially Disadvantaged Group. A Socially Disadvantaged Group is a group whose members have been subject to discrimination on the basis of race, color, national origin, age, disability, and, where applicable, sex, marital status, familial status, parental status, religion, sexual orientation, genetic information, political beliefs, reprisal, or because all or a part of an individual's income is derived from any public assistance program.

We know many Northeast Food for Schools participants have long standing relationships with farmers or food hub/distributors who provide local foods. Those relationships are critical to supporting a robust food system here in Massachusetts. We also want to make sure participants are aware of USDA's goal to increase exposure and sales opportunities to socially disadvantaged farmers and producers, and encourage you to use some of your NFS funds to source from new farmers or producers, where possible. Mass. Farm to School's local farmer directory includes information as to which farms self-identify as socially disadvantaged in their individual farm listings ([www.massfarmtoschool.org/food-source-map](http://www.massfarmtoschool.org/food-source-map)).

# CONTACT INFORMATION

## NEED ADDITIONAL SUPPORT?

Procurement support, strategic allocation, eligible products, RFQ 3-quote process, trainings

Abby Getman Skillicorn, Special Projects Manager  
Massachusetts Farm to School

abby@massfarmtoschool.org  
(413) 253-3844 x703

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Support submitting for reimbursement or confirming requested reimbursement amounts

Megan Perry, Data Associate  
Massachusetts Farm to School

meganp@massfarmtoschool.com  
(413) 253-3844 x705

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Support with program administration, award structure, and manual deposits reflecting reimbursement requested

Margaret Nowak, Local Food Systems Specialist  
DESE, Office for Food and Nutrition Programs

margaret.c.nowak@mass.gov

# COMMUNICATIONS

## *Email Communications to Expect from Mass. Farm to School:*

### AUTOMATIC

Confirmation of submitted reimbursement requests

### MONTHLY

Reminders to submit reimbursement requests for previous month  
Confirmation of month-total reimbursement request submitted to DESE

### AS-NEEDED BASIS

Information about trainings  
Questions about your submission



# TRAINING & WORKSHOP CALENDAR

## AUGUST

**August 23:** "How-to File for Reimbursement" Training

## SEPTEMBER

**September 13:** "How-to File for Reimbursement" Training

**September 20:** "How-to File for Reimbursement" Training

**September 25:** Storytelling! Sharing Your Local Purchasing Story during Farm to School Month

## OCTOBER

**October 4:** MA FRESH Grant: Making the Most of Northeast Food for Schools beyond the 2023-24 School Year

**October 11:** Procurement Regulations: Sourcing Local & Complying with Federal and State Regulations

**October 18:** Peer to Peer Connections

## NOVEMBER

**November 1:** Minimally Processed: What does it mean?

**November 8:** Culturally Relevant Meals in the Cafeteria

**November 15:** Peer to Peer Connections

## DECEMBER

**December 6:** Procurement Workshop: Fresh & Frozen Produce

**December 13:** Student Voice, Student Choice: Collaborative Methods for School Menu Change

## JANUARY

**January 10:** Procurement Workshop: Meat, Seafood, and Dairy

**January 17:** Peer to Peer Connections

**January 31:** Learn about the Launch of a New Procurement Tool

## FEBRUARY

**February 7:** Spring Menu Planning: Utilizing Local Produce & School Garden Harvests

**February 14:** Budgeting for Local in the Next School Year

## MARCH

**March 22:** Massachusetts Farm & Sea to School Conference

**REGISTER HERE:**

[HTTPS://WWW.MASSFARMTOSCHOOL.ORG/  
ANNOUNCEMENT/NFS-WORKSHOPS/](https://www.massfarmtoschool.org/announcement/nfs-workshops/)

# TERRIFIC TRAYS PHOTO COMPETITION

*Submit photos of your lunch trays featuring local food to win prizes!*

As a participating NFS district, you are encouraged to show off how your district is serving local food in this year's Terrific Trays competition for DESE's Making it Count (MIC) Newsletter. Each month, MIC will feature a photo of a Terrific Tray, recognizing the school and local farm who made that meal possible. In addition to being featured in the MIC newsletter, top contestants will win local food swag and a chance at two free tickets to next spring's Healthy Kids Summit. In order to participate, submit photos of your Terrific Trays by visiting the link below.

[BIT.LY/TERRIFIC-TRAYS](https://bit.ly/TERRIFIC-TRAYS)



©Salem Public Schools



©Marlborough Public Schools



©Brookline Public Schools



©Greenfield Public Schools

# REIMBURSEMENT FORM INFORMATION

Your Northeast Food for Schools funds will be distributed on a reimbursement basis. You will request reimbursement for purchases through an online platform (not the DESE security portal). The sections below provide links to the reimbursement form, deadlines for submission and submission instructions.

## REIMBURSEMENT FORM LINK

<https://survey.alchemer.com/s3/7398055/NFSReimbursementForm>

## LOGIN INFORMATION

You have received an email with your login credentials (username & password) to access the reimbursement form. Each district's login information is unique and ties to the Northeast Food for Schools funding for that school food authority. If you manage purchasing for more than one district, you will receive unique login credentials for each one.

You cannot reset your password, if you need help logging into your account, please email [nfs@massfarmtoschool.org](mailto:nfs@massfarmtoschool.org)

## SUBMISSION DEADLINES

You must submit your request for reimbursement by the following dates (based on the month of your invoice):

Invoice Month	Deadline to Request Reimbursement
August 2023	September 30, 2023
September 2023	October 31, 2023
October 2023	November 30, 2023
November 2023	December 31, 2023
December 2023	January 31, 2024
January 2024	February 29, 2024
February 2024	March 31, 2024
March 2024	April 30, 2024
April 2024	May 31, 2024
May 2024	June 30, 2024
June 2024	July 31, 2024

# REIMBURSEMENT FORM INFORMATION

## REIMBURSEMENT INSTRUCTIONS

In order to request reimbursement for purchases, you must provide the following information for each product:

1. Vendor Name(Food Hub/Distributor or Farm/Producer)
2. Invoice Date
3. Delivery Fee (if applicable)
4. Farm/Producer Name (if purchased through a Food Hub/Distributor)
5. Farm/Product's State of Origin
6. Item Name
7. Item Description (If item is minimally processed, describe how: ex: shredded)
8. Total Cost of Item

*If your current distributor is not already providing this information, please ask them to. We are working with local food hubs and distributors to provide this information automatically through their invoices, but there are some distributors/food hubs that are not yet doing so.. Please note that you cannot receive reimbursement for products that you cannot confirm are from within 400 miles.*

## HOW TO FILL OUT THE FORM:

1. Go to: <https://survey.alchemer.com/s3/7398055/NFSReimbursementForm>
2. Enter Username & Password\*

\*Your password is the agreement number for your school food authority.

Your username & password were sent to you via email. If you manage more than one school food authority, you will receive a username & password for each SFA.

The form is set up to accept entries by invoice date and vendor. If you are requesting reimbursement for different invoice dates or from different vendors, please fill out the form once per date/vendor.

Example 1: You received apples & pears from Farmer Max on October 2, 2023 and they are listed on the same invoice. You may use the form once to submit for both apples & pears.

Example 2: You received apples from Farmer Max on October 15th and apples from Farmer Max on October 20th. They have separate delivery dates and invoices. Please submit the apples from October 15th, then return to the form link and submit the apples from October 20th separately.

Example 3: You received pears and apples from New Entry Food Hub on October 10th. Your pears came from Farmer Max and your apples came from Farmer Joe. You may use the form once to enter both items, specifying the farm of origin for each product.



# REIMBURSEMENT FORM INFORMATION

## HOW TO FILL OUT THE FORM, CONT.

You will receive a confirmation email for each time you submit the reimbursement form. Please save these emails for your records.

## STEP BY STEP INSTRUCTIONS

We have created written instructions as well as a video tutorial on how to fill out the reimbursement form. You can find both versions of the instructions here:

<https://www.massfarmtoschool.org/nfs-reimbursement-info/>

# PROCESSED PRODUCT SUBMISSION INFO

*Products must be unprocessed or minimally processed and grown, raised, or caught within 400 miles of the school food authority.*

Examples of producers who make NFS eligible, "minimally processed," foods that have been verified to comply with NFS eligibility:

- Mi Tierra Tortillas from Springfield, MA
- Walden Meats from Tewksbury, MA & VT
- MeatWorks from Westport, MA

If you are purchasing products from a food producer that utilized farm products, like the examples listed above, please enter the producer name in the "Farm/Producer" section and confirm the business location (ie. state). Massachusetts Farm to School will verify if the product is eligible under the NFS eligibility requirements. Review the USDA's definition of "minimally processed foods," to confirm your purchase is eligible. If you have any questions about eligibility, please contact [nfs@massfarmtoschool.org](mailto:nfs@massfarmtoschool.org).

# PRODUCT ELIGIBILITY

All foods must be unprocessed or minimally processed and grown, raised, or caught within 400 miles of your school food authority. These funds are not limited to produce. Funds can be used for dairy, seafood, meat, and grains. Further examples and resources, including webinar recordings and links to trainings are available on our Northeast Food for Schools web page: [www.massfarmtoschool.org/ne-food-schools/](http://www.massfarmtoschool.org/ne-food-schools/)

## EXAMPLES

**Is Massachusetts produced cheese an allowable product to purchase with Northeast for School (NFS) funds?**

Yes! Value added dairy products produced within 400 miles are allowed.

**Are Massachusetts produced corn tortillas made with Massachusetts' corn an allowable product to purchase with NFS funds?**

Yes! Grain products grown and processed within 400 miles are allowed.

**Is bread made in a Massachusetts bakery with wheat from Kansas eligible?**

No, any minimally processed product must only utilize ingredients sourced within 400 miles.

**Is Vermont ground beef eligible?**

Yes, ground beef is considered minimally processed and as long as the beef originates within 400 miles it is an eligible product.

## FAQs

You may find answers to additional frequently asked questions about the Northeast Food for Schools program here: <https://bit.ly/NFS-FAQ-2>

# MEDIA KIT

*We've developed a media toolkit to help you promote your efforts to include more fresh, local produce in your school meals. Below you will find social media text templates, social media graphics templates, sample newsletter text, and a link to a sample press release.*

## NEWSLETTER

In the 2023-2024 school year, our district was allocated \$ [ADD AMOUNT], to spend on local produce and products for school meals. We look forward to providing more fresh, local, and nutritious ingredients in school meals this year with the help of this funding. Please be sure and share any feedback from your students with us! [Share some items you're thinking of purchasing, and some menu ideas - what you're planning to add to the menu].

## SOCIAL MEDIA

In the 2023-2024 school year, our district has been given \$xx [ADD AMOUNT] to spend on local products! We are thrilled to have these funds at our disposal to buy fresh local foods for our students and to support our local farmers & producers! #farmtoschool

Meet some of the fabulous farmworkers at [FARM NAME] who made today's [MENU ITEM] possible! We received beautiful [PRODUCT] from them on [DELIVERY DATE]. Thank you [NAMES, if provided] or [FARM NAME] crew! #farmtoschool

Our Northeast Food for Schools funds have helped us purchase local [PRODUCT] from [FARM NAME, LOCATION]. We made [MENU ITEM] for our students to enjoy! #farmtoschool #localfood #healthyschool-meals

Today we made [MENU ITEM] using [PRODUCT] from [FARM NAME/LOCATION]! The funding we received from the Northeast Food for Schools program made this possible! #farmtoschool #localfood #healthyschoolmeals #fresh&local

Mass. Farm to School & MA DESE Social Media Handles

### **Twitter**

@MAFarmtoSchool  
@MASchoolsK12

### **Facebook**

@MassachusettsDESE  
@MassFarmtoSchool

### **Instagram**

@MassFarmtoSchool

## PRESS RELEASE

<https://bit.ly/NFS-Press-Release-Template>

## GRAPHIC TEMPLATES

<https://bit.ly/NFS-Schools-Canva>