

MASSACHUSETTS **FRESH** GRANT PROGRAM OVERVIEW: FY25 AWARDEES

Administered by the MA Department of Elementary and Secondary Education (DESE), in partnership with the MA Department of Early Education and Care, this grant provides funds for K-12 and early education and care programs to start up or expand their local food purchasing and education efforts. Funds can be used for infrastructure investments such as kitchen equipment or garden installation as well as professional development for educators and school nutrition staff, and enrichment and educational activities for students.

In 2021, the Massachusetts Food for Massachusetts Kids Coalition advocated for the establishment of the first state grant program to fund efforts that connect students in early education programs and K-12 schools to local agriculture through food education, local food purchasing, and community partnerships. With significant support from legislative champions across Massachusetts, \$1,000,000 of American Rescue Plan Act funds were allocated to pilot the MA FRESH Grant Program. The MA Legislature allocated an additional \$750,000 per year for the program in fiscal years 2024 and 2025.



FY25 SUMMARY

In 2025, DESE awarded \$500,000 to 25 school districts and early education programs across the Commonwealth to support local food and food education in schools through the FRESH Grant Program. This third round of applications saw over \$1.3M in requests from 65 applicants. In FY25 DESE also added an additional round of funding entitled FRESH CORPS (Coordination and Optimization of Resources and Partnerships) to specifically support coordination of farm to school activities across districts and programs. In FY25 DESE awarded \$350,000 of FRESH CORPS grants to 14 school districts and early education programs. DESE received \$1.1M in requests from 37 applicants for this high-demand FRESH CORPS opportunity.

FOR MORE INFORMATION

Please visit: www.massfarmtoschool.org/mafresh-grant/



MA FRESH GRANTEEES

K-12

Billerica Public Schools
Boston Public Schools
Brockton Public Schools
Chicopee Public Schools
Dennis-Yarmouth Public Schools
Gill-Montague Public Schools
Hatfield Public Schools
Leominster Public Schools
Lowell Public Schools
New Bedford Public Schools
North Middlesex Public Schools
Orange Public Schools
Oxford Public Schools
Provincetown Public Schools
Taunton Public Schools
Westford Public Schools
Whitman-Hanson Public Schools
Worcester Public Schools

Early Education

Brockton Day Nursery, Inc
Communities United, Inc (Lexington)
Community Action, Inc (Haverhill)
East End House (Cambridge)
Merrimack Valley YMCA (Lawrence)
People Incorporated (Fall River)
South Shore YMCA
Worcester Head Start



MA FRESH CORP GRANTEEES

K-12

Acton-Boxborough Public Schools
Boston Public Schools
Bristol County Agricultural High School
Chicopee Public Schools
Collaborative for Regional Educational Service
and Training (Andover)
Frontier Regional School District
Gloucester Public Schools
Nauset Public Schools
Northampton Public Schools
Salem Public Schools
Watertown Public Schools

Early Care

Crispus Attucks Children's Center
(Boston)
MetroWest YMCA
Robbins Children's Programs, Inc
(Attleboro)

BILLERICA PUBLIC SCHOOLS

Award Amount: \$16,668.00

The Billerica School Farm Project will develop a system to grow nutritious food to provide additional healthy food options to their community. By investing in alternative growing methods (hydroponics, indoor grow lights) they will increase their growing capacity and provide curriculum opportunities for students year-round. Indoor gardens will allow students to learn about sustainability, nutrient cycling, soil science, and vertical gardening. The Farm Project will help nurture a sense of community around food cultivation as students engage with a broad range of community stakeholders.

BROCKTON PUBLIC SCHOOLS

Award Amount: \$20,000.00

Brockton Public Schools' project aims to establish an indoor mushroom farm to promote mushroom cultivation and education within the school community. This initiative will allow Brockton to grow a variety of mushrooms such as oyster, pink oyster, maitake, shiitake, snow white, and more. In addition to providing educational opportunities, the farm will also serve as a platform for community engagement through tasting sessions, lunch and learns, and special events.

DENNIS-YARMOUTH PUBLIC SCHOOLS

Award Amount: \$26,870.00

The Dennis-Yarmouth High School Farm Initiative is a transformative project designed to cultivate sustainable agriculture, promote inclusivity, and foster healthy lifestyle choices. The Initiative will establish an indoor hydroponics system and community farm that will offer cooking classes, engage students with disabilities, and provide produce to food pantries, while practicing environmentally responsible farming methods. Students will be able to visit organic farms, engage with master gardeners, and take cooking classes. Integrating culinary arts, sustainability, and community support, this project will empower individuals of all abilities while addressing critical food access and environmental concerns.

BOSTON PUBLIC SCHOOLS

Award Amount: \$30,000.00

Boston Public Schools Food and Nutrition Services will develop a sustainable procurement channel for local food grown by Black, Indigenous, and People of Color (BIPOC) farmers, supported by the development of an educational component for students at point of sale. This project would encompass a) networking to identify New England BIPOC farmers, b) an exploration of the opportunities and impediments for BIPOC farmers to conduct business with Boston schools, c) finding solutions to overcome challenges, and d) initiating long-term, respectful procurement relationships.

CHICOPEE PUBLIC SCHOOLS

Award Amount: \$1,985.00

Chicopee Public Schools would like to connect their existing farm to school activities with more productive school gardens and greater student knowledge about Massachusetts-grown products. They will install school garden irrigation systems at four existing gardens to water more efficiently and consistently throughout the year. To encourage garden learning and engagement, they will hold a district-wide Harvest of the Month trading card design contest and print custom, informative trading cards to be distributed during taste tests and garden planting and harvest events.

GILL-MONTAGUE PUBLIC SCHOOLS

Award Amount: \$27,540.00

The Gill-Montague Regional School District will expand their existing Farm to School program at Gill Elementary by providing opportunities for students to plant vegetables throughout the year through hydroponics and a small greenhouse. The district will also create a new program at Sheffield Elementary including building a raised bed garden and hydroponic system for their school. Sheffield is also experimenting with the use of a worm compost system as a part of their gardening endeavors. Stipends will be provided to educators at both schools to create lessons and extensions to established curriculum in order to support farm to school programming.

HATFIELD PUBLIC SCHOOLS

Award Amount: \$3,848.00

Hatfield Elementary School students will build awareness of the connections between sustainable farming practices, climate change, and health through a partnership with Prospect Meadow Farm. This will be achieved with student-led taste testing events featuring locally-sourced produce from this partnership, followed by farm-led tours.

LEOMINSTER PUBLIC SCHOOLS

Award Amount: \$10,565.00

Grow, Prepare and Eat Local at Leominster High School is a collaboration between the culinary arts students, life skills students, staff, Chartwells, wellness committee, professional development committee, and local partners. Goals include: introducing gardening with aeroponics & greenhouse techniques; recipe development with local produce; broadening the school community's food knowledge; and providing food literacy lessons in alignment with DESE's Comprehensive Health & Physical Education Framework.

LOWELL PUBLIC SCHOOLS

Award Amount: \$30,000.00

The Lowell Public Schools' Food is Fun! program will teach students about their local food system by collaborating with community partner, Mill City Grows. Students will engage in hands-on educational experiences in their school gardens and learn about healthy eating by incorporating their harvests into their school cafeteria menus.

NEW BEDFORD PUBLIC SCHOOLS

Award Amount: \$28,054.00

"New Bedford Eats Using Hydroponics" looks to inspire and engage students in the elements of hydroponics and how hydroponics are used in the growing of produce. Growing lettuce and herbs, as well as other produce, will be an educational experience for students at the elementary and high school levels. Harvested products will be incorporated into the school menu and meal preparation in these schools.

NORTH MIDDLESEX PUBLIC SCHOOLS

Award Amount: \$6,550.00

The North Middlesex Regional School District will grow its current community garden and gardening club to increase awareness and education about the health benefits of fresh vegetables. The district will upgrade the community garden currently located at the high school, increase the students' access and exposure to fresh vegetables grown locally at school and in the community, and leverage high school students to be stewards of food literacy within their building and with students in the elementary and middle schools.

ORANGE PUBLIC SCHOOLS

Award Amount: \$6,710.00

Fisher Hill Elementary School will connect a farm field trip for Grades 1 & 2 to their social studies curriculum, specifically, "Topic 4. Economics: resources and choices" of the Massachusetts' Social Studies Curriculum Framework in which students should, "explain the relationship between natural resources and industries and jobs in a particular location (farming & trading)." Additionally, the school will have a speaker from Seeds of Solidarity come to share a presentation and they will conduct a Mass. Farm to School curriculum lesson.

MASSACHUSETTS FRESH AWARDEE OVERVIEW: K-12

OXFORD PUBLIC SCHOOLS

Award Amount: \$2,950.00

Oxford Public Schools will help students understand food systems by integrating agriculture education with school food service. Students will grow crops in a campus greenhouse which will be served in the cafeteria. The project will explore the link between agriculture, health, and sustainable food sourcing, encouraging students to take ownership of the food they grow and connecting the classroom to the cafeteria.

PROVINCETOWN PUBLIC SCHOOLS

Award Amount: \$8,000.00

The goal of Provincetown's "Expansion of Edible Gardens: Native Fruits" project is to expand the current food program gardens by designing & installing a new orchard with native apple and pear trees as well as a native fruit garden with blueberries, raspberries, elderberries, and beach plums. This expansion will allow inclusion of new native food resources in the current farm to school program, enhancing educational opportunities about local food webs, nutrition, and food insecurity. The gardens will increase the district's resource output and support locally grown food in the school kitchen and community food pantry.

TAUNTON PUBLIC SCHOOLS

Award Amount: \$29,985.00

Taunton's project will unite students with moderate to severe disabilities and other at-risk high school students in a state-of-the-art hydroponics lab, where they will grow produce for the Tiger Den (student-run restaurant), for cafeteria taste tests, and for local families. Through partnerships with local farms, students will receive hands-on learning experiences about sustainable agriculture practices to learn about growing and packaging food. They will learn about marketing by creating PSAs to share their learning journey with the entire school district.

WESTFORD PUBLIC SCHOOLS

Award Amount: \$16,600.00

Norman E. Day Elementary School will bring their students' vision of a more inclusive school nutrition program to reality. They will expand their long-standing school garden program and enable students to cultivate a variety of ethnically significant vegetables that honor their heritage. Students will collaborate with school nutrition professionals to incorporate those crops into fresh, new options to be served on the lunch line. These new offerings will mirror the growing Indian, Asian, African, and Hispanic student body, while also allowing for the celebration of diversity through food.

WHITMAN-HANSON PUBLIC SCHOOLS

Award Amount: \$30,000.00

"Hydroponics, Culinary Class, School Gardens: Oh My!" is an engaging program designed for students to explore the intersection of innovative gardening techniques and culinary arts. Participants will learn about hydroponics, cultivate their own school garden, and develop hands-on cooking skills, while discovering the importance of sustainable practices and healthy eating. Through interactive lessons and activities, students will gain a deeper appreciation for where their food comes from and how to prepare delicious meals from fresh, locally grown ingredients.

MASSACHUSETTS FRESH AWARDEE OVERVIEW: EARLY EDUCATION

BROCKTON DAY NURSERY, INC

Award Amount: \$30,000.00

Brockton Day Nursery's project is an engaging, interactive, and fun opportunity for children to learn about how and where their food comes from. Children will learn how some foods are better than others for their bodies, while supporting the cultural diversity of Brockton Day Nursery's community. The complementary curriculum will be taught in multiple languages and highlight foods that are ethnically diverse.

COMMUNITIES UNITED, INC. (LEXINGTON)

Award Amount: \$21,112.00

Feeding Hungry Minds will introduce the families to their local food community. The program will conduct local food taste tests, plan farm field trips, and incorporate farm to early education curriculum. Staff will feel confident in implementing this program through a partnership with Mass Audubon who will providing 5 hours of farm to early childhood education professional development training. Through these new initiatives, the families in this program will feel more connected to their community and incorporate locally grown food into meals reflecting their cultural backgrounds. .

COMMUNITY ACTION, INC (HAVERHILL)

Award Amount: \$28,053.00

Community Action, Inc (CAI) is committed to addressing the food and nutrition needs of their community in innovative ways. CAI will offer food and nutrition programming for Head Start children, focusing on cooking and gardening. They have an integrated approach to the project — supporting professional development for Head Start staff; encouraging experiential learning in the classroom; and offering opportunities for families to deepen the connection in fun and engaging ways at home.

EAST END HOUSE (CAMBRIDGE)

Award Amount: \$29,214.00

SproutEd, is an initiative that aims to deepen the connection between young children and fresh, local foods through the creation of an on-site garden. In partnership with Green City Growers, East End House will integrate gardening into their early education curriculum. The garden will become a living classroom, offering hands-on learning experiences that ignite curiosity and enthusiasm for sustainable food practices and healthy eating. By immersing the youngest learners in this dynamic environment, East End strives to cultivate a lifelong passion for nutritious eating and environmental stewardship.

MERRIMACK VALLEY YMCA (LAWRENCE)

Award Amount: \$20,785.00

Merrimack Valley YMCA will provide opportunities for preschool youth to learn about the food chain through hands-on activities and experiences. Educators will be trained in farm to school education through Mass Audubon's SEEDS program to help develop food literacy and interactions with local farms. They will also provide educators with Dr. Yum curriculum to support curriculum development and help educate youth on the importance of eating healthy food. Students will grow their own vegetables and herbs in classroom gardens. Parents will be engaged with programming focusing on picky eaters, the importance of healthy breakfasts, and lessons on healthy meal preparation.

PEOPLE INCORPORATED (FALL RIVER)

Award Amount: \$22,871.00

The People Incorporated Early Education Roots of Friendship Project will focus on Science, Technology, Engineering, and Math for preschoolers and will prioritize hands-on, interactive learning that helps children discover concepts through play and exploration. Educators will provide engaging activities that show the connections between food, nutrition, community, and the natural world. Children will explore locally sourced organic produce, meet farmers from the community, and learn about the magic and science of growing food in their classrooms and their new outdoor organic gardens.

MASSACHUSETTS FRESH AWARDEE OVERVIEW: EARLY EDUCATION

SOUTH SHORE YMCA

Award Amount: \$30,000.00

As South Shore YMCA expands its Hanover Family Farm by 8,000 square feet, they are building new breakout education areas dedicated to supporting preschoolers and teachers in southeastern Massachusetts. These new spaces will be designed for small gatherings that will include farm-to-school professional development programs for 90 preschool teachers, afterschool, and summer camp staff, as well as teachers from around the region from other districts and programs.

WORCESTER PUBLIC SCHOOLS: HEAD START

Award Amount: \$30,000.00

Worcester Public Schools' Head Start program will implement a Spring Harvest farm to school unit, culminating with 26 classrooms taking field trips to a local farm. This hands-on experience will be complemented by books, classroom and home activities, and cooking experiences centered around locally grown spring produce. The goal is to provide an immersive educational experience that enhances learning through nature exploration, literacy, and hands-on cooking projects.

ACTON-BOXBOROUGH PUBLIC SCHOOLS

Award Amount: \$28,961.00

The Acton Boxborough Food and Nutrition Department will support local, scratch-cooked menus through recipe development, staff training, and student and community-based outreach. Culinary specialists will be utilized within the department to champion sustainable changes to benefit students, staff, and the community.

BOSTON PUBLIC SCHOOLS

Award Amount: \$48,316.00

Boston Public Schools Food and Nutrition Services will establish a new full-time Farm to School Manager position. They will establish and implement a strategy to build, manage, and execute relationships with local farmers, schools, and food service providers to increase the procurement and serving of fresh, locally sourced foods for school meals. The Farm to School Manager will promote healthy eating habits and support sustainable food systems. They will build the educational bridge between school meals and local, sustainable food and academic learning.

BRISTOL COUNTY AGRICULTURAL HIGH SCHOOL

Award Amount: \$35,420.00

Bristol County Agricultural High School (Bristol Aggie) will launch a foundational phase of its local food systems initiative by leveraging the internal knowledge and expertise of faculty and staff. This phase will prioritize strategic planning, with a focus on curriculum development, logistical coordination, and program establishment. Building on previous efforts such as the Northeast Food for Schools Grant and ongoing farm-to-table programs, this initiative will enhance student engagement in food literacy and expand our capacity to integrate sustainable food systems into our academic and operational framework.

CHICOPEE PUBLIC SCHOOLS

Award Amount: \$16,620.00

Funds will be used to add a full-time Garden Educator to our district's Farm to School team. Working alongside our district's Farm to School Coordinator, this employee will design and teach garden education for 2,800 elementary school students at 9 schools. Additional funds will be used to pay for professional development opportunities for our Garden Educator and existing district staff to ensure the continuation of our initiatives and curriculum after the grant period ends.

COLLABORATIVE FOR REGIONAL EDUCATIONAL SERVICE AND TRAINING (ANDOVER)

Award Amount: \$14,950.00

Farm Fresh to CREST's Culinary is driven by CREST educational collaborative's mission, "elevating every learner together" and dedicated to the goal of serving new healthy school menus with a multitude of fresh produce and protein farmed locally in the Merrimack Valley, while optimizing current Massachusetts FRESH CORP resources and educational partnerships. In addition, CREST's students, families, teachers, and food service partners will also be immersed in increased food literacy activities with the goal of increasing farm to table knowledge in all K-12 classrooms.

FRONTIER REGIONAL SCHOOL DISTRICT

Award Amount: \$27,372.00

Frontier Regional Union 38 School District will hire three part-time staff members to work collaboratively with the existing Farm to School Team to create a districtwide Farm to School Program — integrating Classroom, Cafeteria and Community. This grant will also provide funding for seven current staff members to become leaders in the Farm to School Program at their schools. All the members of the Farm to School Team will engage community partners — including local farms and businesses, caregivers, teachers, and administrators — in a process that reflects the diversity of our community and celebrates its agricultural roots.

MASSACHUSETTS FRESH FRESH CORP AWARDEE OVERVIEW: K-12

GLOUCESTER PUBLIC SCHOOLS

Award Amount: \$16,075.00

Gloucester Public Schools will work in partnership with the non-profit Backyard Growers to expand their Harvest of the Month taste tests to include preschool and middle school students. They currently host taste testing at four elementary schools. In addition, preschool students will take part in two additional school garden learning experiences per year, offering four total touchpoints in the garden per year. Lastly, Backyard Growers will offer educators garden guides on ways to infuse seasonal use of the garden into classroom learning.

NAUSET PUBLIC SCHOOLS

Award Amount: \$17,700.00

Nauset aims to establish a Farm to School Program Coordinator position to enhance local food procurement, integrate farm-based education, and manage district farming systems in alignment with cafeteria needs. The coordinator will oversee 3 school gardens, a greenhouse, and the district's hydroponic units to ensure year-round food production while fostering hands-on learning opportunities for students. They will collaborate with local farmers, provide professional development for staff, and align menus with locally sourced foods to promote sustainability and enrich the school community.

NORTHAMPTON PUBLIC SCHOOLS

Award Amount: \$15,125.00

The Freshampton Farm to School program at Northampton Public Schools has addressed various forms of the 3 C's (Cafeteria, Classroom, and Community) for more than 15 years. However, the programming needs to be better aligned and sustainable for the long-term. We are starting the Freshampton Collaborative, with the goal of strategically planning, refining, creating, and coordinating programs that are more cohesive and sustainable, in addition to promoting these programs so that the community is fully aware and proud of this work.

SALEM PUBLIC SCHOOLS

Award Amount: \$44,039.00

Salem Public Schools (SPS) will work with a Farm to School (FTS) consultant team to integrate FTS, food literacy, and school garden education into Pre-K, elementary and middle school classrooms and Out of School Time programs. We will identify FTS Coaches at each school to lead this work and provide professional development to other educators. The consultants will also work with SPS on the creation of a School Garden Master Plan to ensure gardens are used equitably and consistently, and a communications strategy to include FTS information in weekly school newsletters, social media, and special events.

WATERTOWN PUBLIC SCHOOLS

Award Amount: \$26,200.00

This grant will fund a part-time Freight Farm teacher position and expand a part-time garden coordinator role to a full-time position to enhance food literacy and local food system education from a K-8 model to K-12. The grant will also fund supplies and professional development activities related to the Freight Farm and school gardens. By integrating experiential, culturally sustaining learning opportunities into classrooms, cafeterias, and the broader school community, this initiative will strengthen connections between students, their local food systems, and nutrition education.

CRISPUS ATTUCKS CHILDREN'S CENTER (BOSTON)

Award Amount: \$17,600.00

CACC will work with a consultant to support local food system educational activities for the nearly 200 children and their families who are a part of its early childhood education center in Dorchester. This includes optimizing growing and teaching potential with children and teachers in raised bed gardens and a beautiful new greenhouse, providing professional development for teachers on food and nutrition, providing workshops for families on growing vegetables and fruits, and providing input on how we incorporate the produce we grow into the meals the center provides.

METROWEST YMCA (FRAMINGHAM)

Award Amount: \$15,023.00

Funding from MA FRESH CORP will increase the YMCA's part-time Farm to School Director to full-time. This will allow the YMCA to enhance the impact of their work across classrooms, cafeterias, and communities while also building new year-round relationships with additional farms and local food sources.

ROBBINS CHILDREN'S PROGRAMS (ATTLEBORO)

Award Amount: \$26,591.00

Robbins will utilize three of their School Age Educators to implement a taste testing experience for children and families in the Preschool Program. Funds will also be used to provide stipends to support staff with project activities and the implementation of a Garden Club. Robbins will also be taking Preschool children on field trips to a local pick-your-own farm so they can experience a variety of fruits and vegetables when they are in season, as well as collaborating with Mass Audubon to provide professional development to Preschool Educators about gardening.