

# MASSACHUSETTS FRESH GRANT PROGRAM OVERVIEW: FY26 AWARDEES

The Massachusetts FRESH (Farming Reinforces Education and Student Health) Grant is a statewide farm to school and farm to early care grant program. The program is administered by the Massachusetts Department of Elementary and Secondary Education (DESE), in partnership with the MA Department of Early Education and Care, and is designed to support K-12 and licensed early education and care centers to start up or expand their local food purchasing and food education efforts. Funds can be used for infrastructure investments such as kitchen equipment or garden installations, as well as professional development for school staff, and enrichment and educational activities for students. In FY25 DESE also added an additional grant category entitled FRESH CORPS (Coordination and Optimization of Resources and Partnerships) to specifically support coordination of farm to school activities across districts and programs.

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, 2025 and 2026.



## FY26 SUMMARY

In this 4th year of funding, DESE received \$2.3 million in requests to fund MA FRESH grant and MA FRESH CORP (Coordination and Optimization of Resources and Partnerships) projects in FY2026. Of these applications, DESE awarded \$485,445 in FRESH Grant funds to 21 school districts and childcare centers, and awarded MA FRESH CORP grants of \$806,869 to 14 school districts and early education centers across the Commonwealth. These grants support not only local food and food education in schools, but also capacity building for farm to school programs.

## FOR MORE INFORMATION

Please visit: [www.massfarmtoschool.org/mafresh-grant/](http://www.massfarmtoschool.org/mafresh-grant/)



**MA FRESH GRANTEES**

**K-12**

Andover Public School District  
Chicopee Public School District  
Collegiate Charter School of Lowell  
Easthampton Public School District  
Greater Lawrence Regional Vocational Technical  
Innovation Academy Charter District (Tyngsborough)  
ISA Dept of Youth Services (Statewide)  
Lowell Community Charter Public District  
Lowell Public School District  
North Adams Public School District  
Old Rochester Public School District  
Revere Public School District  
Springfield Public School District  
Warwick Public School District



**Early Education**

Beverly Children's Learning Centers  
Boys & Girls Club of Greater Westfield, Inc.  
Greater Lowell Family YMCA  
Making Opportunity Count (MOC Childcare & Headstart Services) (Montachusett Region)  
Merrimack Valley Young Men's Christian Association, Inc (Lawrence)  
Morris Professional Child Care Services, Inc. (Springfield)  
The Salvation Army Massachusetts Division (Cambridge)

## MA FRESH CORP GRANTEES

Grantees received continuation funding in FY26 to support projects initiated in FY25

### 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)



**ANDOVER PUBLIC SCHOOL DISTRICT**

**Award Amount: \$20,750**

A fruit and vegetable garden will be established in the new greenhouse located at the West Elementary School. This project is designed to increase students' access to, and familiarity with, fresh fruits and vegetables. The garden will provide a dynamic, hands-on learning environment where teachers can enhance their curriculum with engaging lessons on gardening, nutrition, and healthy eating. The project will also include the addition of a compost tumbler and a water conservation station to support sustainability and environmental stewardship.

**COLLEGIATE CHARTER SCHOOL OF LOWELL**

**Award Amount: \$28,987**

Collegiate Charter School of Lowell's FRESH Start Initiative, expands the "Wolf Gar-Den" into a hands-on learning hub for all K-12 students. This project will enrich health curriculum with new garden-based lesson plans and immersive experiences like taste-testing, farm field trips, and a new garden club. In partnership with community experts like Mill City Grows, Massachusetts Farm to School, and Parlee Farms, the FRESH Start Initiative aims to cultivate lifelong healthy habits and deepen community connections for staff, students and their families.

**GREATER LAWRENCE REGIONAL VOCATIONAL TECHNICAL**

**Award Amount: \$30,000**

Greater Lawrence Technical School (GLTS) aims to create a GLTS FRESH after school club which will involve a living wall garden and composting system on campus. This project will provide students with hands-on experiences in growing food, understanding sustainable agriculture, and managing organic waste, while promoting health, environmental awareness, and cross-collaboration learning from three different shops within the school community.

**CHICOPEE PUBLIC SCHOOL DISTRICT**

**Award Amount: \$9,858**

Chicopee Public schools will utilize the funds to purchase a Flex Farm from Fork Farms to supply Bowie Elementary School's cafeteria with local lettuce and other produce. School staff and the district's Farm to School Coordinator provide opportunities for teachers, students, and families to learn about hydroponics and taste the food grown on the Fork Farm. With guidance by a stipended staff member and support from Green City Growers, Bowie Elementary students in 4th and 5th grade will help maintain the unit and assist with harvesting, all with the goal of growing 100 pounds of lettuce in the first year.

**EASTHAMPTON PUBLIC SCHOOL DISTRICT**

**Award Amount: \$29,063**

Mountain View School in Easthampton, MA, will expand its successful PK-5 teaching garden by establishing a middle school production garden. This new garden will supply fresh fruits and vegetables to the school meal program and serve as a hands-on learning space for middle school students. The project integrates nutrition education with gardening through a collaborative curriculum developed by the health and garden teachers, using the texts Braiding Sweetgrass for Young Adults and Animal, Vegetable, Miracle. An afterschool garden internship will engage students in planting, tending, and harvesting crops for school meals.

**INNOVATION ACADEMY CHARTER DISTRICT (TYNGSBOROUGH)**

**Award Amount: \$27,947**

Innovation Academy Charter school will utilize grant funding to provide professional development for nutrition staff and opportunities for student engagement in garden setup, growing, and harvesting as well as projects to create food from school resources (i.e. maple sugaring). Funding will be used to offer students interactive field trips with community partners to learn about the composting cycle and create a school-wide composting program. IACS aims to further engage families and the community by providing student-grown spices and produce which can then be used in meals that families create for the school's multicultural potluck dinner.

## ISA DEPT OF YOUTH SERVICES

**Award Amount: \$14,642**

The Department of Youth Services (DYS) aims to expand its Plant-to-Plate program across all state-operated sites, connecting youth to the food they eat. To support this expansion, DYS will develop a comprehensive Plant-to-Plate Guide tailored to the unique needs of DYS programs and youth. DYS will also provide training for key staff and stakeholders, with the goal of establishing a sustainable, system-wide Plant-to-Plate program that enhances nutrition, builds healthy eating habits, instills the knowledge & skills required to grow one's own food, and supports lifelong wellness for youth across all eight state-operated sites.

## LOWELL PUBLIC SCHOOLS

**Award Amount: \$30,000.00**

Lowell Public Schools will support their Future Farmers program. Future Farmers is a collaborative farm-to-school initiative designed to deepen student learning through hands-on gardening & food system education. Wang M.S. will construct new raised beds & refurbish its greenhouse to support year-round cultivation and immersive instruction in environmental science, nutrition, and sustainability. Robinson M.S. will rebuild its outdoor garden beds in partnership with Mill City Grows, incorporating culturally relevant crops and food justice education. Together, these efforts will increase access to local foods, foster healthy eating habits, and strengthen student and family connections to the local food system.

## OLD ROCHESTER PUBLIC SCHOOL DISTRICT

**Award Amount: \$30,000**

Old Rochester will support its Grow Education (Grow-FTS), linking gardens, curriculum, cafeterias & communities for a farm to school approach to health. This project will work towards creating the foundational norm of healthy eating to support health & wellness. Old Rochester will use the gardens as a launching pad to incorporate nutrition lessons into every 3rd-grade classroom across the district, while bringing classroom learning back to the school cafeterias. Grow-FTS has developed a three-year plan that will build gardens, educate teachers & stakeholders, develop & implement nutrition/science curriculum, and build a school-wide culture of health at all 3 elementary schools.

## LOWELL COMMUNITY CHARTER PUBLIC DISTRICT

**Award Amount: \$28,905**

The Lowell Community Charter School (LCCPS) and Mill City Grows' Agricultural Education Collaborative will focus on establishing & deepening students' connection to the local food system. The main components of the 2025-2026 Collaborative will include monthly taste tests to increase students awareness of and appreciation for local fruits and vegetables; an after-school agricultural club that will include instruction on nutrition, field trips to the Mill City Grows farm & kitchen, growing vegetables in an indoor garden, cooking classes, and a culminating event in which students share their knowledge of what constitutes a healthy diet and lifestyle.

## NORTH ADAMS PUBLIC SCHOOL DISTRICT

**Award Amount: \$30,000**

North Adams Public Schools will procure local produce to provide more scratch-cooked meals & encourage students to enjoy nutritious food options. The district hopes to boost student consumption of local fruits and vegetables, purchase products grown by local farmers and more deeply connect schools to the farmers in their communities. This program also intends to strengthen existing relationships with local farmers and expand education to a.) help students make informed food choices through increased food literacy, b.) improve their diets by cultivating their interest in and enjoyment of fresh, local produce, and c.) recognize the role local farms play in the community.

## REVERE PUBLIC SCHOOL DISTRICT

**Award Amount: \$30,000**

With MA FRESH Funding, Revere Public Schools will launch a new farm to school initiative that integrates food literacy into health and academic curriculum across multiple grade levels. Through the development of engaging, standards-aligned lessons, experiential field trips to local farms, and professional development for educators, students will gain a deeper understanding of food systems, healthy eating, and local agriculture. The initiative will strengthen community partnerships and complement nutritious meals served through the district's Child Nutrition Program.

**SPRINGFIELD PUBLIC SCHOOL DISTRICT**

***Award Amount: \$28,859***

With MA FRESH funding, Springfield aims to further integrate school gardens into early care classrooms through professional development and capacity building in alignment with the district's Wellness Policy. The funding will also enable Springfield to send students on farm field trips to a local farm which supplies produce used in their own school lunches. With all of Springfield's elementary schools now having outdoor growing spaces, this funding will support the creation of a school garden food safety plan for staff to utilize when engaging students in garden activities.

**WARWICK PUBLIC SCHOOL DISTRICT**

***Award Amount: \$24,400***

Based on the district's 25 acre property, Warwick Community School (WCS) will use these grant funds to support a place-based local food learning initiative. WCS will engage students, staff and community in learning about food production, sourcing, accessibility and sustainability through the indoor growing space, kitchen, and outdoor gardens. The District will also create related curriculum which aligns with Massachusetts standards to supplement classroom learning with experiential learning. WCS aims to expand upon its mission of addressing environmental and social injustices to also include food security and local food systems.

## BEVERLY CHILDREN'S LEARNING CENTERS

**Award Amount: \$29,846**

Beverly Children's Learning Centers (BCLC) will enhance its highly impactful gardening program with an on-site greenhouse to further deepen the knowledge and skills of both educators and children. By extending the growing season, this project will enable BCLC to cultivate multiple, abundant harvests throughout the year, providing students with a comprehensive understanding of the entire food cycle—from seed to harvest. This hands-on experience will reinforce key principles in sustainable agriculture, environmental stewardship, and healthy living, while expanding the gardening curriculum to a year-round model.

## GREATER LOWELL FAMILY YMCA

**Award Amount: \$17,645**

The YMCA Roots & Wellness Project is a new initiative designed to connect children and their families to the local food system through gardening, nutrition education, and meaningful food experiences. This project integrates garden-based learning into the curriculum, offering children opportunities to grow and care for fresh fruits and vegetables. Children will participate in farm visits and enjoy meals prepared with locally grown ingredients. By collaborating with the local community, the YMCA Roots & Wellness Project promotes food literacy, encourages healthy eating habits, and supports the development of lifelong wellness practices both in the classroom and at home.

## MERRIMACK VALLEY YMCA

**Award Amount: \$21,871**

The Merrimack Valley YMCA's Early Childhood Programs will engage young learners through hands-on garden activities, farm and food producer tours, and interactive "Meet the Chef" experiences to help them understand the importance of farming and the local food system.

This project will also allow early childhood educators to receive professional development to integrate these experiential lessons into the classroom setting, fostering lifelong connections to healthy eating, sustainability, and community for all students and families.

## BOYS & GIRLS CLUB OF GREATER WESTFIELD

**Award Amount: \$30,000**

The Boys & Girls Club of Greater Westfield's Farm to Preschool project will benefit 60 preschoolers and their families by promoting healthy eating habits, food literacy, and connections to local agriculture. Through monthly cooking activities, seasonal taste tests, and meals featuring Massachusetts-grown produce, children will explore new foods in fun, hands-on ways. An indoor and outdoor preschool garden, and visits to local farms, will deepen students' understanding of where food comes from, while family events such as a farmers' market visit and a pumpkin fest will foster community-wide engagement in farm to preschool learning.

## MAKING OPPORTUNITY COUNT CHILDCARE & HEADSTART SERVICES (MONTACHUSETT REGION)

**Award Amount: \$14,792**

Making Opportunity Count's Farm-to-School Partnership will strengthen community relationships between childcare centers and local food producers through experiential learning. Children and families will participate in field trips to local farms, as well as participate in on-site workshops. This project will also allow educators to participate in professional development that will connect these nature-based experiences to the existing teaching strategies.

## MORRIS PROFESSIONAL CHILD CARE SERVICES

**Award Amount: \$3,000**

Morris Professional Child Care Services, Inc will create an outdoor garden space with this grant funding. The planned garden space will include fruits and vegetables, as well as herbs, that grow well in the region. Staff will use the created garden space to demonstrate a connection between food and environment, and also the work that goes into growing food. The project will also provide funding for field trips that will include visiting local farms and the local community garden.

MASSACHUSETTS

# FRESH MA FRESH AWARDEE OVERVIEW: EARLY EDUCATION

## OUR PLACE, THE SALVATION ARMY MASSACHUSETTS

### DIVISION (CAMBRIDGE)

**Award Amount: \$4,880**

Our Place will offer 8 new exciting field trips for preschoolers to local farms and nature-focused programs like Wilson Farm, Cider Hill Farm, and Mass Audubon. These trips will give children ages 2-5 the chance to explore fields, greenhouses, and gardens while learning about where their food comes from and the importance of healthy eating. Through hands-on planting activities, they'll discover how fruits and vegetables grow, and they'll even get to taste fresh, nutritious produce straight from the farm. With games, art projects, and up-close experiences with farm equipment, these trips are a fun and meaningful way to inspire curiosity, a love for nature, and an understanding of food and nutrition

# FRESH FRESH CORP AWARDEE OVERVIEW: K-12

*All the below grantees of the MA FRESH CORP are continuing to execute grant projects initiated in FY25 and are focused on providing professional development training to relevant staff, and increasing capacity for food education and local sourcing in their meal programs and learning communities.*

## **ACTON-BOXBOROUGH PUBLIC SCHOOLS**

**FY 26 Award Amount: \$69,911**

*(FY25: \$28,961, Total Award Amount: \$98,872)*

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

## **BOSTON PUBLIC SCHOOLS**

**FY 26 Award Amount: \$85,500**

*(FY25 Award: \$48,316, Total Award Amount: \$133,816)*

Boston Public Schools Food & Nutrition Services established a full-time Farm to School Manager position with FY25 MA FRESH CORP funding. This position is now in the process of implementing a strategy to build relationships with local farmers, schools, and food service providers to increase locally sourced foods for school meals. The Manager is also building the educational bridge between school meals and local, sustainable food and academic learning within BPS.

## **BRISTOL COUNTY AGRICULTURAL HIGH SCHOOL**

**FY 26 Award Amount: \$85,500**

*(FY25: \$35,420, Total Award Amount: \$120,920)*

Bristol County Agricultural High School (Bristol Aggie) is launching a foundational phase of its local food systems initiative by leveraging the internal knowledge and expertise of faculty and staff. This phase is engaging in 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 is enhancing student engagement in food literacy to expand capacity and integrate sustainable food systems into the academic and operational framework for the district.

## **CHICOPEE PUBLIC SCHOOLS**

**FY 26 Award Amount: \$55,825**

*(FY25: \$16,620, Total Award Amount: \$72,445)*

Chicopee Public Schools utilized FY25 MA FRESH CORP funding to hire a full-time Garden Educator to the district's Farm to School team. Working alongside Chicopee's Farm to School Coordinator, the Garden Educator is designing and teaching garden lessons for 2,800 elementary school students at 9 schools. Additional funds are being used to pay for professional development opportunities for the Garden Educator and existing district staff to ensure the continuation of the initiatives and curriculum after the grant period ends.

## **COLLABORATIVE FOR REGIONAL EDUCATIONAL SERVICE AND TRAINING (ANDOVER)**

**FY 26 Award Amount: \$14,203**

*(FY25: \$14,950, Total Award Amount: \$29,153)*

Farm Fresh to CREST's Culinary is guided by the CREST Educational Collaborative's mission to "elevate every learner together." The program is committed to serving healthy school meals that feature a wide variety of locally farmed produce and protein from the Merrimack Valley, while maximizing existing Massachusetts FRESH CORP resources and educational partnerships. Through this initiative, CREST students, families, teachers, and food service partners are engaging in expanded food literacy activities designed to build farm-to-table knowledge across all K-12 classrooms.

## **FRONTIER REGIONAL SCHOOL DISTRICT**

**FY26 Award Amount: \$75,509**

*(FY25: \$27,372, Total Award Amount: \$102,881)*

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 district-wide 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**

**FY26 Award Amount: \$14,716**

*(FY25: \$16,075, Total Award Amount: \$30,791)*

Gloucester Public Schools, in partnership with the non-profit Backyard Growers, is expanding their Harvest of the Month taste tests to include preschool and middle school students—building upon the existing programming at the four elementary schools. Preschool students are taking part in two additional school garden learning experiences per year, which is providing these students with four total touchpoints in the garden per year. Backyard Growers is also providing Gloucester educators garden guides on ways to infuse seasonal use of the garden into classroom learning.

## **NAUSET PUBLIC SCHOOLS**

**FY26 Award Amount: \$55,153**

*(FY25: \$17,700, Total Award Amount: \$72,853)*

Nauset utilized FY25 funding to hire a Farm to School Coordinator, focused on enhancing local food procurement, integrating farm-based education in classrooms, and managing district farming systems in alignment with cafeteria needs. The coordinator manages 3 school gardens, a greenhouse, and the district's hydroponic units. They are collaborating with local farmers, providing professional development for staff, and aligning menus with locally sourced foods to promote sustainability, enrich the school community, and connect the farming and fishing community with Cape schools.

## **NORTHAMPTON PUBLIC SCHOOLS**

**FY26 Award Amount: \$45,885**

*(FY25: \$15,125, Total Award Amount: \$61,010)*

Northampton Public Schools' Freshampton program has supported the three C's—cafeteria, classroom, & community—for more than 15 years. With MA FRESH CORP funding, Northampton launched the Freshampton Collaborative to strategically plan, strengthen, and align programs into a more cohesive and sustainable model. This work ensures that all students have access to locally sourced, culturally relevant meals and meaningful food systems education. MA FRESH CORP funding also supports coordinated communications to share these efforts helping the broader Northampton community celebrate and take pride in this work.

## **SALEM PUBLIC SCHOOLS**

**FY26 Award Amount: \$84,845**

*(FY25: \$44,039, Total Award Amount: \$128,884)*

With MA FRESH CORP funding, Salem Public Schools (SPS) is partnering with a consultant team to integrate farm to school, food literacy, and school garden education into Pre-K through middle school classrooms, as well as Out of School Time programs. SPS is identifying Farm to School Coaches at each school to lead this work and providing professional development to educators across the district. SPS is also developing a School Garden Master Plan to ensure school gardens are used equitably and consistently, and implementing a communications strategy that shares Farm to School initiatives through weekly school communications.

## **WATERTOWN PUBLIC SCHOOLS**

**FY26 Award Amount: \$82,946**

*(FY25: \$26,200, Total Award Amount: \$109,146)*

Watertown Public Schools established a part-time Freight Farm teacher position and expanded the garden coordinator role to a full-time position. Watertown Public Schools is now strengthening the food literacy and local food systems education from a K–8 model to K–12. The district is also using grant funds to purchase supplies and provide professional development related to the Freight Farm and school gardens. Through hands-on, culturally sustaining learning experiences integrated into classrooms, cafeterias, and the broader school community, Watertown Public Schools is deepening students' connections to their local food system.

# FRESH FRESH CORP AWARDEE OVERVIEW: EARLY EDUCATION

## **CRISPUS ATTUCKS CHILDREN'S CENTER (BOSTON)**

**FY26 Award Amount: \$33,560**

*(FY25: \$17,600, Total Award Amount: \$51,160)*

CACC, in partnership with a Dorchester-based garden education consultant, is supporting local food systems education for nearly 200 children and their families at its early childhood education center in Dorchester. The organization is maximizing hands-on learning in raised bed gardens and a new greenhouse by engaging children and teachers in growing and teaching activities. CACC is also providing professional development for teachers focused on food & nutrition, offering family workshops on growing fruits and vegetables, and guiding the incorporation of garden-grown produce into meals served at the center.

## **ROBBINS CHILDREN'S PROGRAMS (ATTLEBORO)**

**FY26 Award Amount: \$60,499**

*(FY25: \$26,591, Total Award Amount: \$87,090)*

Robbins is engaging three School Age Educators to lead taste-testing experiences for children and families in the Preschool Program. The organization is using grant funds to provide staff stipends that support project activities and the launch of a Garden Club. Robbins is also taking preschool children on field trips to a local pick-your-own farm to experience seasonal fruits and vegetables and partnering with Mass Audubon to provide gardening-focused professional development for Preschool Educators.

## **METROWEST YMCA (FRAMINGHAM)**

**FY26 Award Amount: \$42,817**

*(FY25: \$15,023, Total Award Amount: \$57,840)*

Funding from MA FRESH CORP allowed the YMCA to elevate the part-time Farm to School Director to a full-time position, utilizing FY25 MA FRESH CORP funds. With increased staffing and continuity, the YMCA is enhancing the impact of their work across classrooms, cafeterias, and communities by providing necessary staffing to direct the program. With this expanded role, the YMCA is now building new year-round relationships with additional farms and local food sources, so the meal programs can preserve bountiful harvests from the YMCA farms to utilize in school meals, and source local, fresh food, year-round.