

2024-25 Farm to Community Food Hubs Grant

DRAFT Request for Application

Released for Public Comment:
November 12, 2024

Public Comments Due:
by 11:59pm PT on Friday, December 6, 2024
No late submissions accepted

California Department of Food and Agriculture
Inspection Services Division
Office of Farm to Fork
Farm to Community Food Hubs Grant Program
Website: <https://cafarmtofork.cdfa.ca.gov/F2CFHP.html>



CDFA OFFICE OF
FARM *to* FORK

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Public Input for this Draft Request for Application

The California Department of Food and Agriculture (CDFA) seeks public comments about this **draft** Request for Application (RFA). Comments about any part of this draft RFA are welcomed, but CDFA is also specifically seeking public comments about the following sections:

- [Section 1.2 Definitions](#)
- [Section 1.3 Two Funding Tracks](#)
- [Section 1.4 Eligibility and Exclusions](#)
- [Section 1.6 Allowable and Unallowable Costs](#)
- [Section 1.8 Reporting for Grantees](#)
- [Section 2.2 Grant Application Evaluation Criteria](#)
- [Section 3.2 Reviewing Draft Applications](#)

CDFA will consider public comments before finalizing this RFA. Public comments are **due by 11:59pm PT on December 6, 2024**. The public may submit comments in one or more of the following ways:

- **Written comments via online form:** Please submit written comments via [this online form](#).
- **Live Comments via Zoom:** During the public comment period, CDFA’s Office of Farm to Fork will host public feedback sessions about this draft RFA. Each session will include an overview of the RFA and time for questions and comments. Please join us by following the Zoom registration links below:

Public Feedback Sessions	When	Where	Register
Session #1 <i>With live Spanish interpretation</i> <i>Con interpretación en vivo al español</i>	November 18, 2024 at 12pm PST	Zoom	Link
Session #2 <i>Session intended for CA Native American Tribes and Tribal-serving organizations</i>	November 21, 2024 at 9:30am PST	Zoom	Link
Session #3 <i>English only</i>	December 3, 2024 at 5pm PST	Zoom	Link

Estimated Program Timeline

Public Comment Period	November 12 – December 6, 2024
Grant Application Opens	Winter 2025
CDFA Grant Application “Office Hours” Zoom Sessions	Twice a month throughout the application period
CDFA Draft Application Review (see details below)	Throughout the application period for eligible entities
Grant Applications Due	Winter 2025 Date will be released in final RFA

Application Review Process	Dates to be released in final RFA
Award Announcement	Date to be released in final RFA
Grant Term Begins	Date to be released in final RFA

Tips for Applicants

- Read this entire Request for Application (RFA). For questions, read the Frequently Asked Questions at [insert web link in final RFA] or email cafoodhubs@cdfa.ca.gov.
- CDFAs staff is available to support applicants. Use the application assistance services detailed in [Section 3.0 Application Assistance and Questions](#).
- Review [Section 1.1 Purpose](#) to understand the purpose and priorities of the Farm to Community Food Hubs Program. Does the proposed project align well with those priorities?
- Review [Section 1.4 Eligibility and Exclusions](#) to check if the organization is eligible to be an applicant.
- Review [Section 2.2 Grant Application Evaluation Criteria](#) closely. This is what application reviewers follow to score applications.
- Use the application materials and templates detailed in [Section 2.0 Application and Review Process](#).
- Make sure Letters of Support are signed with either an e-signature, “wet” signature, or digital signature. **Unsigned letters will not be counted.**

General Writing Tips

- When responding to application questions, write responses with as much clarity as possible. Assume the person reading your application has never heard of the organization and is not familiar with its work. Application reviewers understand topics related to regional food systems, supply chains, nutrition, agriculture, and more, but they rely on application materials to understand the details of the proposed project.
- Ask a friend or trusted partner to review application materials and provide feedback. Does everything make sense to them? How would they score it using the application evaluation criteria in [Section 2.2](#)?

1.0 About the Program

1.1 Purpose

The Farm to Community Food Hubs Program was established by California Food and Agricultural Code ([Sections 590-593](#)). The Farm to Community Food Hubs Program aims to incentivize the creation and permanency of public-serving aggregation and distribution enterprises (i.e., community food hubs – [read definition below](#)) by investing in planning activities and piloting investments in the capital aggregation and distribution infrastructure needed to:

- Increase purchasing of local, environmentally sustainable, climate-smart, and equitably produced food by schools and other institutions
- Build a better food system economy
- Support the local farming and indigenous food production economies
- Accelerate climate adaptation and resilience and
- Employ food system workers with fair wages and working conditions.

Project proposals can range from planning projects aimed at starting or expanding a community food hub to projects that include infrastructure and operational costs needed to conduct community food hub operations. See [Section 1.3 Two Funding Tracks](#) for more details and possible project types.

All proposed projects must demonstrate how the community food hub will:

- Serve California food producers (e.g. farmers, ranchers, sea harvesters, Indigenous food production practitioners - [see food producer definition below](#)). The community food hub must prioritize food producers that operate on 500 acres or less; are cooperatively owned; are using sustainable or climate smart agriculture practices or production systems; are following state labor practices; or who are socially disadvantaged, veterans, disabled, a beginning farmer or rancher, and/or limited resource farmer or rancher.
- Prioritize distributing California grown or produced foods to public institutions and nonprofit organizations, with primary emphasis on public schools, food banks, and other food distribution nonprofit organizations in the region. Please note public institutions include several Tribal institutions ([read the public institutions definition below](#)). Awarded projects may serve private institutions, such as private universities or for-profit grocery retail, as long as public institutions and nonprofit organization buyers are prioritized.
- Cultivate and maintain its own financial sustainability

CDFA is setting aside 10% of program funding for California Native American Tribes and Tribal-serving nonprofit organizations. This grant program will also prioritize:

- The creation or expansion of new community food hubs ([defined below](#)), but also considers projects proposed for developed community food hubs ([defined below](#)).
- Projects that demonstrate projects will be producer-led community food hubs. See how the grant program [defines “producer-led community food hub” below](#).

Please see [Section 2.2 Grant Application Evaluation Criteria](#) for details on how applications will be scored.

1.2 Definitions

- **Beginning farmer or rancher:** a person who has materially and substantially participated in the operation of a farm or ranch for 10 years or less.
- **California grown or produced foods:** Foods that are grown in California or harvested in its surface or coastal waters AND, if processed, 100% processed in California.
- **Capital aggregation and distribution infrastructure:** physical and digital assets that enable and support the establishment and operation of food aggregation and distribution activities. Examples include, but are not limited to, land, transportation vehicles, food processing equipment, digital inventory platforms, and cold/dry food storage equipment.
- **Community food hub:** an organization or business that serves as a supply chain intermediary by providing aggregation, distribution, and/or marketing services for local or regional California food producers ([defined below](#)) to strengthen food producers’ ability to reach wholesale, retail, and institutional markets. These organizations or businesses may use a centrally located facility, such as a warehouse, or aggregate more informally, such as virtually coordinating supply chain activities for multiple local or regional producers. For the purposes of this grant program, community food hubs must:

- Prioritize serving California food producers that operate on 500 acres or less; are cooperatively owned; are using sustainable or climate smart agriculture practices or production systems; are following state labor practices; and/or who are socially disadvantaged, veterans, disabled, a beginning farmer or rancher, and/or limited resource farmer or rancher.
- Prioritize distributing food products from California food producers to public institutions and nonprofit organizations, with primary emphasis on public schools, food banks, and other food distribution nonprofit organizations in the region. Distribution of the food products may be contracted to a value-added intermediary, such as a produce, grain, meat, or seafood processor, if the food products are ultimately provided on a prioritized basis to public institutions or nonprofit organizations.
- Be able to identify the source (e.g. location of the farm) of 100% of the food products that it sells

Only entities establishing or expanding new community food hubs ([define below](#)) and expanding developed community food hubs ([defined below](#)) are eligible to apply to this grant program. Please see [Section 1.4 Eligibility and Exclusions](#) for more details about who can and cannot apply.

Please note: CDFA understands some entities do not self-identify as “community food hubs” but have been serving as supply chain intermediary by providing aggregation, distribution, and/or marketing services for local or regional California food producers to strengthen food producers’ ability to reach wholesale, retail, and institutional markets. CDFA still considers these entities “community food hubs” for the purposes of this grant program.

- **Food producer:** a person, group of individuals, nonprofit organization, or California Native American Tribe that leases, rents, or owns land in California (whether the land is publicly owned, privately owned, or Tribal land) and cultivates crops, raises livestock, and/or uses Indigenous food production practices on this land, and/or a California seafood harvester.
- **Developed community food hub:** a community food hub ([as defined above](#)) that had an average annual gross cash income range of \$1,000,001 and \$5 million during the previous three-year period. Community food hubs that have an average gross cash income greater than \$5 million for the last three years are not eligible to apply to the program.
- **Limited resource farmer or rancher:** Per the [United States Department of Agriculture \(USDA\)](#), limited-resource farm households are those that, for two years in a row, have low farm sales and low household income, according to [this tool](#).
- **New community food hub:** an entity that has either (1) never conducted community food hub ([as defined above](#)) operations OR (2) has been conducting community food hub operations AND had an average annual gross cash income \$1 million or less during the previous three-year period.
- **Producer-led community food hub:** community food hubs ([defined here](#)) in which California food producers are the owners, operators, and/or decision makers. The food producers have decision-making roles that directly affect the planning, design, and/or operations of the community food hub. Producer-led community food hubs could be using any form of legal business structure, whether it is a cooperative or not. For the purposes of this grant program, additional points will be given to applications that demonstrate the project is a producer-led community food hub.
- **Public institutions:** California public schools and school districts, including University of California, California State University, and California Community College campuses; Early Care and Education

sites; public hospitals and health clinics located in California; California correctional facilities and prisons; food service providers operating in any of the above-mentioned public institutions or federal, state, or local government facilities located in California; Tribal schools (such as those administered through the Bureau of Indian Education), Tribal health centers and clinics (such as those administered through the Indian Health Service), and institutions owned and/or operated by California Native American Tribes that provide community, cultural, or health services to Tribal members.

- **Socially disadvantaged food producer:** a food producer who is a member of a “socially disadvantaged group.” Per California’s Farmer Equity Act of 2017 (Assembly Bill (AB) 1348) Food and Agricultural Code section 510 et seq., a “socially disadvantaged group” is a group whose members have been subjected to racial, ethnic, or gender prejudice because of their identity as members of a group without regard to their individual qualities. In accordance with AB 1348, these groups include all the following: African Americans, Native Indians, Alaskan Natives, Hispanics, Asian Americans, and Native Hawaiians and Pacific Islanders. In addition, the California Farm to Community Food Hubs Grant Program includes women and lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender, and queer (LGBTQ+) people as socially disadvantaged groups. Many groups have been “socially disadvantaged” within the agriculture industry; the inclusion of such groups as listed above reflects that reality and is consistent with the objective of ensuring that these groups are included in the funding priorities of this RFA.
- **Sustainable agriculture production practices or methods; climate smart agriculture practices; or other regenerative strategies:** Practices or methods that use ecologically beneficial means of soil improvement, irrigation, cultivation, harvesting, transportation, and marketing for California agriculture using methods including those defined by the [USDA Natural Resources Conservation Service Conservation Practice Standards](#) and those identified by [the CDFA Office of Environmental Farming and Innovation](#) via the [Healthy Soils Program](#), [Alternative Manure Management Program](#), [Dairy Digester Research and Development Program](#), and [State Water Enhancement and Efficiency Program](#). These include, but are not limited to, cover cropping, no or reduced till, hedgerow plantings, compost application, and prescribed grazing. Climate smart agriculture production systems include certified organic or transitioning to certified organic. Other regenerative strategies include those that also increase resilience to climate change, improve the health of communities and soil, protect water and air quality, increase biodiversity, and help store carbon in the soil. Please note that a process is currently underway to define regenerative agriculture for state policies and programs; once the definition is established, this grant program’s definition of regenerative agriculture will align.
- **Value added food products:** for the purposes of this grant program, value-added food products are products using California grown or produced foods and that are created by a processing activity, other than post-harvest processing and light processing (e.g. chopping), that significantly alters raw food ingredients to create a new, marketable product for future sale. The purpose of a community food hub producing these value-added products would be to reduce food waste, diversify incomes streams, maximize nutritional benefits, and/or increase revenue for the community food hub and its food producer vendors. Examples include salsa, jam, tomato sauce, and cheese.
- **Veteran food producers:** Based on the first component of [the USDA definition](#) for a “veteran farmer or rancher,” the California Farm to Community Food Hubs Grant Program defines a veteran food producer as a producer who served in the United States Army, Navy, Marine Corps, Air Force, or Coast Guard, including the reserve components thereof, and was released from the service under conditions other than dishonorable. Please note that the full USDA definition requires that producers not only meet the first component noted above but also meet this second requirement:

have not operated a farm or ranch, have operated a farm or ranch for not more than 10 years, or first obtained veteran status during the most recent 10-year period. This second requirement does not apply to this program.

1.3 Two Funding Tracks

The California Legislature appropriated \$15 million from the General Fund to CDFA for the Farm to Community Food Hubs Grant Program. CDFA will collectively award up to \$14.4 million via competitive grants. The amount of funds and number of projects that CDFA will award depends on the number of applications and amount requested. CDFA is setting aside 10% of program funding for California Native American Tribes and Tribal-serving nonprofit organizations.

[Skip to Track 2: Infrastructure and Operations](#)

Track 1: Planning and Piloting

Award amount	\$50,000- \$250,000
Grant term	Up to 24 months
Allowed Costs	<u>See allowable and unallowable costs below</u>
Reporting	<u>See required reporting requirements for Track 1 grantees below</u>
Eligible Applicants	The following entities conducting planning for a new community food hub or to expand capacity for a developed community food hub : nonprofit organization; California public school district; Tribal school (such as those administered through the Bureau of Indian Education); California County Office of Education; cooperative business; food and agriculture-related business; Certified B Corporation; California Native American Tribe; Tribal-serving nonprofit organization; Resource Conservation District; University of California, California State University, and other public institutions of higher education. <u>See eligibility details below.</u>

Track 1 will fund a variety of entities ([see eligibility details below](#)) to develop one or more plans, and pilot certain activities directly related to those plans, that (1) support the development of or expand capacity for a new community food hub or (2) expand the capacity of a developed food hub. Again, all proposals should enable and advance:

- Serving California food producers, prioritizing food producers that operate on 500 acres or less; are cooperatively owned; are using sustainable or climate smart agriculture practices or production systems; are following state labor practices; and/or who are socially disadvantaged, veterans, disabled, a beginning farmer or rancher, and/or limited resource farmer or rancher.
- Prioritizing distribution of California food products to public institutions ([defined above](#)) and nonprofit organizations, especially public schools, food banks, and other food distribution nonprofit organizations in the region. Awarded projects may serve private institutions, such as private universities or for-profit grocery retail, as long as public institutions and nonprofit organization buyers are prioritized.
- Cultivating and maintaining the community food hub's financial sustainability

Please note: to prioritize new community food hubs, eligible applications will receive additional points.

Community food hub plans could include, but are not limited to:

- Food system assessments for how to improve aggregation and distribution capacity to increase the sale of local/regional food products
- Business development plans related to processing, aggregating, storing, distributing, and marketing regional food products, including value-added products
- Feasibility studies assisting with supply chain partner planning, to analyze market potential, capacity, and potential competitors and partners in the region
- Developing marketing strategies for producers of local food and value-added products
- Financial planning to identify funding sources and strategize sustainability
- Developing efficient facility and operational systems for processing, storing, aggregating, and distributing food
- Education, community engagement, and training plans to facilitate partnerships and/or educate local/regional producers and institutional buyers
- Site planning and design, such as technical design and engineering

Piloting Activities (Optional)- 20% cap in project budget

Track 1 applicants also have the option to propose piloting activities as part of the proposed project.

- Piloting activities are operational or business activities that allow an applicant to test a new process, strategy, operation, or other community food hub activity that will directly benefit, improve, or advance the planning process proposed for the grant award. The purpose of piloting activities is not to launch full-scale, long-term operations, but instead to strengthen the proposed plan by test-running ideas to determine if they are worth greater investment in the future. Applicants will have to clearly demonstrate why piloting activities are necessary to improve the proposed planning activities. See allowable costs for piloting activities in [Section 1.6 Allowable and Unallowable Costs below](#).
- For example, piloting activities could include conducting early-stage food aggregation activities with local producers to distribute to a public institution or nonprofit organization in order to gather data that supports financial projections and product pricing in a business plan.
- Please note: Track 1 applicants that propose piloting activities and receive a grant award must meet more reporting requirements than Track 1 grantees that do not include piloting activities. [Read Section 1.8 Reporting for Grantees below](#).

Track 2: Infrastructure and Operations

Award amount	\$500,000- \$2,000,000
Grant term	Up to 60 months
Allowed costs	See allowable and unallowable costs here
Reporting	See required reporting requirements for Track 2 grantees below
Eligible Applicants	The following entities initiating or expanding operations for a new community food hub or expanding capacity for a developed community food hub : nonprofit organization; California public school district; Tribal school (such as those administered through the Bureau of Indian Education); California County Office of Education; cooperative business; food and agriculture-related business; Certified B Corporation; California Native American Tribe; Tribal-serving nonprofit organization; Resource Conservation District; University of California, California

State University, and other public institutions of higher education. [See eligibility details below.](#)

Track 2 will fund a variety of entities ([see eligibility details below](#)) to cover infrastructure and operating costs that (1) establish operations or expand capacity for a new community food hub ([defined here](#)) or (2) expand capacity of a developed community food hub ([defined here](#)). Proposed projects should enable and advance:

- Serving California food producers, prioritizing food producers that operate on 500 acres or less; are cooperatively owned; are using sustainable or climate smart agriculture practices or production systems; are following state labor practices; and/or who are socially disadvantaged, veterans, disabled, a beginning farmer or rancher, and/or limited resource farmer or rancher.
- Prioritizing distribution of California food products to public institutions ([defined here](#)) and nonprofit organizations, especially public schools, food banks, other food distribution nonprofit organizations in the region in the region. Awarded projects may serve private institutions, such as private universities or for-profit grocery retail, as long as public institutions and nonprofit organization buyers are prioritized.
- Cultivating and maintaining the community food hub's financial sustainability

Please note: to prioritize new community food hubs, eligible applications will receive additional points.

Track 2 projects could include, but are not limited to:

- Implementing business and operational plans to initiate or expand capacity of a community food hub to sell to buyers
- Purchasing land, designing, and constructing community food hub facilities, such as warehouses or food processing facilities to increase sales of local/regional food products
- Increasing storage, food processing, and/or transportation capacity to increase sales of local/regional food products
- Initiating, coordinating, and/or expanding sales to buyers, prioritizing public institutions and nonprofit organizations
- Engaging, educating, and/or training food producer vendors to increase their capacity to sell to and/or partner with the community food hub
- Establishing partnerships and operations for inter-food hub trading/sales to increase sales of local/regional food products

Additional Details for All Tracks:

- CDFA reserves the right to offer an award amount less than the amount requested.
- CDFA reserves the right to ask applicants clarifying questions about their applications and work with applicants to modify proposals.
- Grant recipients cannot use grant funds before the grant term start date or after the grant term end date.
- This grant program does NOT require matching funds. The CDFA will fund up to 100% of the total project cost.
- Indirect costs can be up to 30% of the total direct costs. Applicants from the University of California or California State University may claim their agreed upon indirect cost rate with CDFA.
- Review [Section 1.6 Allowable and Unallowable Costs](#) for guidance regarding use of funds.

- Review [Section 1.9 Advance Payments or Reimbursements](#) for details for advance payments and reimbursement options.

1.4 Eligibility and Exclusions

For questions about eligibility, please email cafoodhubs@cdfa.ca.gov.

- Eligible entities can only apply as a **lead applicant** once and must select one funding track.
- Entities may be included as a **project team member** in multiple applications. Project team members do not need to meet the eligibility requirements below.
- An entity that is participating in multiple proposed projects as a project team member or that is a lead applicant in one application and a project partner in another, **must ensure that proposed projects are not duplicative and there is no duplication of project costs**. If an entity is participating in multiple projects that receive an award, those funds should be kept separate and be tracked and managed with proper accounting procedures.
- [Skip to Track 2: Infrastructure and Operations](#)

Track 1: Planning and Piloting Eligibility

Who CAN apply?	<p>The following entities based in and operating in California that will conduct planning for a new community food hub (defined above) or will conduct planning to expand the capacity of a developed community food hub (defined above):</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Food and agriculture-related business • Nonprofit organization • California public school district • California County Office of Education • Cooperative business • Certified B Corporation • California Native American Tribe (includes both federally-recognized and non-federally-recognized Tribes) • Tribal school (such as those administered through the Bureau of Indian Education) • Tribal-serving nonprofit organization. Please note: Tribal-serving nonprofit organizations are required to submit a signed Letter of Support from each California Native American Tribe(s) the organization is directly serving or partnering with as part of this project. • Resource Conservation District • University of California, California State University, and other public institutions of higher education <p><u>Please note:</u></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • If the project is conducting planning for a community food hub that is <u>currently operating</u>, the lead applicant should be <u>the owner</u> of the community food hub. • If the project is conducting planning related to a community food hub that <u>does not currently exist</u>, lead applicants <u>do not</u> have to be the expected owner of the potential community food hub. For example, a public school district can apply as a lead applicant to conduct a community food hub
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	<p>feasibility study, even if the school district may or may not intend to be the owner of the community food hub identified in the study. These applicants must clearly describe which entity or entities intend to be the owner(s) and operator(s) of the future community food hub. If the owner(s) and operator(s) are unknown at the time of application, the applicant must clearly describe how their proposed planning efforts will identify the owner(s) and operator(s).</p>
Who CANNOT apply?	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Individuals • Other state and federal entities • Other California county and city government entities • Private schools • Food hubs, aggregators, and distributors that do not align with the definitions of new community food hub or developed community food hub in Section 1.2 Definitions

Track 2: Infrastructure and Operations Eligibility

Who CAN apply	<p>The following entities based in and operating in California that will (1) initiate operations or expand capacity for a new community food hub (defined above) or (2) expand capacity and manage operations for a developed community food hub (defined above):</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Food and agriculture-related business • Nonprofit organization • California public school district • California County Office of Education • Cooperative business • Certified B Corporation • California Native American Tribe (includes both federally-recognized and non-federally-recognized Tribes) • Tribal school (such as those administered through the Bureau of Indian Education) • Tribal-serving nonprofit organization. Please note: Tribal-serving nonprofit organizations are required to submit a signed Letter of Support from each California Native American Tribe(s) the organization is directly serving or partnering with as part of this project. • Resource Conservation District • University of California, California State University, and other public institutions of higher education <p>Please note: the lead applicant must be the owner of the community food hub that the project is addressing.</p>
Who CANNOT apply?	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Individuals • Other state and federal entities • Other California county and city government entities • Private schools

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Food hubs, aggregators, and distributors that do not align with the definitions of new community food hub or developed community food hub in Section 1.2 Definitions
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1.5 No Matching Dollars Required

Applicants are **not required** to provide matching dollars. Providing matching dollars does not earn an application more points.

1.6 Allowable and Unallowable Costs

All costs must be **reasonable and necessary to meet project goals**. The cost is reasonable if, in its nature and amount, it does not exceed what would be incurred by a prudent person under the circumstances prevailing at the time the decision was made to incur the cost.

Proposed projects for Track 1 and Track 2 may include activities and costs that enable a community food hub to **serve private institutions**, such as private universities or for-profit grocery retail, as long as public institutions and nonprofit organization buyers are prioritized as part of the project. Applicants are asked to demonstrate how the project prioritizes public institutions and nonprofit organizations.

Because of the purpose of the Farm to Community Food Hubs Program ([see Section 1.1 Purpose](#)), the grant **will not cover costs related to direct-to-consumer activities**, such as delivering boxes of food directly to individuals and households.

- If a proposed project includes costs that benefit both direct-to-consumer activities and activities related to institutions and nonprofit organizations, the applicant should use reasonable and properly documented methods to estimate what proportion of the cost benefits the proposed project that relates to activities including institutions and nonprofit organizations and which proportion benefits non-project activities.
- Please refer to [Section 330.1\(c\)\(1\) of the CDFA Grant Administration Regulations](#) regarding all costs that will benefit both grant project activities and non-grant project activities.

[Skip to Track 2: Infrastructure and Operations](#)

Track 1 Allowable and Unallowable Costs

Track 1: Allowable Costs	
% of award	Description
No cap	<p>Direct Costs - Community food hub planning</p> <p>Equipment, supplies, salaries/wages, labor fringe benefits, contractual costs, travel, and other costs <u>that are reasonable and necessary</u> to conduct community food hub planning. See examples of plans above in Section 1.3 Two Funding Tracks. These costs could include, but are not limited to:</p>

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Personnel salaries/wages (except overtime) for people who are directly working on implementation of the proposed project • Fringe benefits for people who are directly working on implementation of the proposed project • Software necessary for planning project activities, such as survey or mapping tools • Costs associated with community outreach, such as venue rental fees, stipends for farmer participation, or printing materials • Costs associated with education and training that directly increase knowledge or capacity of food producers to participate in partnering with and/or selling to the community food hub. For example, costs to educate/train producers on food safety requirements or how to earn organic certification. • Costs associated with plans related to developing lightly processed California grown or produced foods. Lightly processing foods could include peeling, chopping, grinding, shredding, or slicing. • Costs associated with plans related to developing value-added food products. See definition of value-added products above in Section 1.2 Definitions. • Fees for technical contractors/consultants • Travel costs, including meals, incidentals, and lodging expenses related to travel, that are necessary for the performance of the grant award, according to Section 322 of the CDFA Grant Administration Regulations. • Rental costs of real property and equipment • Refer to Sections 303(26), 324.1, and 324.2 of the CDFA Grant Administration Regulations for a definition of equipment and guidance regarding equipment property records and disposition. • Refer to Section 330.1(c)(1) of the CDFA Grant Administration Regulations if costs will benefit both grant project activities and non-grant project activities.
20% cap	<p>Direct Costs - Community food hub piloting activities (optional)</p> <p>Applicants have the <u>option</u> to propose piloting activities in the application and project budget. Read more about piloting activities above under Track 1: Planning and Piloting in Section 1.3 Two Funding Tracks.</p> <p>These costs cannot represent more than 20% of the total direct costs for the proposed planning project. These costs can <u>only include</u>:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Food safety certification and training • Refrigerated vans to deliver California food products • Coolers and other food storage equipment to store California food products • Boxes and other food packaging supplies necessary for aggregating and distributing California food products • Construction costs that are necessary to implement proposed and approved piloting activities. For example, electrical upgrades necessary to install a cooler or the installation of a concrete pad necessary to support food storage equipment.

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Rental fees for kitchen or food processing facilities to test development of lightly processed and/or value-added food products. Personnel salaries/wages (except overtime) for people who are directly working on implementation of the piloting activities Refer to Sections 303(26), 324.1, and 324.2 of the CDFA Grant Administration Regulations for a definition of equipment and guidance regarding equipment property records and disposition. Refer to Section 330.1(c)(1) of the CDFA Grant Administration Regulations if costs will benefit both grant project activities and non-grant project activities. <p>Note for refrigerated/freezer equipment: CDFA encourages applicants and grantees to purchase the most energy-efficient and climate-friendly refrigeration and freezer equipment possible. Not including this kind of equipment in the project budget will <u>not</u> impact scoring.</p>
Up to 30% of direct costs	<p>Indirect Costs</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Up to 30% of total direct costs may be used for indirect costs. Indirect costs are facilities and administrative costs that cannot easily be tied directly to the activities of the grant. Examples of common indirect costs include administrative/clerical services, rent, utilities, internet and telephone service, maintenance, and general office supplies. See Section 303(a)(36) of the CDFA Grant Administration Regulations. Applicants from the University of California or California State University may claim their agreed upon indirect cost rate with CDFA. These applicants must follow their established policies for calculating indirect cost rates. Please note that for projects with a non-profit fiscal sponsor, fiscal sponsorship fees may be allowable as an indirect cost, if charged consistent with the sponsored organization’s established policies. Fiscal sponsorship fees are <i>not</i> allowable as a direct cost.
Track 1 Unallowable Costs	
% of award	Description
0%	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Construction costs <u>unless</u> they are necessary to implement proposed and approved piloting activities. See the allowed piloting activity costs above. Purchasing supplies, infrastructure, equipment (including land), and/or other costs related to community food hub operations <u>unless</u> they are proposed and approved as piloting activity costs. See the allowed piloting activity costs above. Developing new agricultural products, such as new crop varieties Plans directly related to agricultural production and/or farm certifications for individual farms or ranches. Examples include, but are not limited to, developing a farm’s conservation plan, a farm’s food safety plan, a farm’s organic transition plan, or a farm’s seasonal crop production plan. Farm equipment, tools, materials, and/or supplies related to agricultural production

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Costs related to direct-to-consumer food distribution. Refer to Section 330.1(c)(1) of the CDFA Grant Administration Regulations regarding costs that will benefit both grant project activities and non-grant project activities. • Costs for contributions and donations from the grant recipient to other entities. See CDFA Allowable and Unallowable Items of Cost, section 6. • Lease-to-own costs for real property and equipment. See CDFA Allowable and Unallowable Items of Cost, section 22b. • Incorporation fees, business license fees, and other costs associated related to organizing a business or similar entity. See CDFA Allowable and Unallowable Items of Cost, section 17. • Costs of promotional items, memorabilia, gifts, souvenirs, and similar items, advertising and public relations that are <u>not directly related to the purpose or objectives of the grant program or grant award</u>. See CDFA Allowable and Unallowable Items of Cost, section 1.
0%	General CDFA unallowable costs. Please refer to the CDFA List of Allowable and Unallowable Items of Cost .
0%	Any costs incurred before or after the grant term. Any costs outside the project scope. Please note that prior approval from the CDFA is required for any changes to an approved project scope of work or budget once the agreement is fully executed. Failure to obtain prior written approval from the CDFA may result in denial of costs incurred.

Track 2 Allowable and Unallowable Costs

Track 2: Allowable Costs	
% of award	Description
No cap	<p>Direct Costs</p> <p>Equipment, supplies, salaries/wages, labor fringe benefits, contractual costs, travel, and other costs <u>that are reasonable and necessary</u> to initiate operations or expand capacity for a new community food hub or expand capacity for a developed community food hub. These costs could include, but are not limited to:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Personnel salaries/wages (except overtime) for people who are directly working on implementation of the proposed project • Fringe benefits for people who are directly working on implementation of the proposed project • Product inventory and sales software • Costs associated with vendor and buyer engagement and training • Costs related to agricultural production and/or farm certifications, such as purchasing farm production equipment or farm food safety/GroupGAP certification, <u>if these costs are for the purpose of</u> increasing the capacity of multiple food producers to become community food hub vendors.

- Farm equipment, tools, materials, and/or supplies related to agricultural production if purchased for the purpose of sharing, loaning to, selling, and/or providing discounted prices to the community food hub's food producer vendors.
- Fees for technical contractors/consultants
- Costs for developing value-added food products. See definition of value-added products above [in Section 1.2 Definitions](#).
- Construction costs and associated permits
- Coolers, trucks, vans, forklifts
- Food processing equipment and food packaging
- Insurance necessary for operation
- Costs of advertising and public relations that are directly related to the purpose or objectives of the grant program or grant award.
- Travel costs, including meals, incidentals, and lodging expenses related to travel, that are necessary for the performance of the grant award, according to [Section 322 of the CDFA Grant Administration Regulations](#).
- Certifications and trainings associated with the community food hub's food safety, organic certification, and other regulatory requirements necessary to perform the grant project.

About Food Safety

Applicants that do not currently have a food safety plan in place for a community food hub must include costs related to developing food safety plans in the Proposed Budget for this application. CDFA expects grant recipients to meet a level of food safety consistent with their business/organization operations and in accordance with USDA requirements and Food and Drug Administration Food Safety Modernization Act (FSMA), including the FSMA Preventative Controls Rule, as applicable, and any local health department requirements. Grant recipients may use grant funds for costs to meet necessary food safety requirements for their projects. Grant recipients should work with buyers to determine what level of food safety the community food hub must meet to sell food to those buyers. These costs could include, but are not limited to, food safety consulting services or food safety training. Applicants can figure out a community food hub's status under the federal FSMA Preventative Controls Rule using the flow chart in [this document](#) and find food hub food safety resources at [this website](#).

Note for refrigerated/freezer equipment: CDFA encourages applicants and grantees to purchase the most energy-efficient and climate-friendly refrigeration and freezer equipment possible. Not including this kind of equipment in the project budget will not impact scoring.

Additional Details

- Refer to Sections [303\(26\)](#), [324.1](#), and [324.2 of the CDFA Grant Administration Regulations](#) for a definition of equipment and guidance regarding equipment property records and disposition.

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Refer to Section 330.1(c)(1) of the CDFA Grant Administration Regulations if costs will benefit both grant project activities and non-grant project activities.
75% cap	<p>Direct Costs - Purchase/Lease of Land</p> <p>Funding for purchase of land or monthly/annual lease payments is allowable for up to 75% of total direct costs and requires prior written approval by CDFA.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Land is considered “equipment” if it is tangible personal property having a useful life of more than one year and a per-unit acquisition cost of \$5,000 or more. See section 303(26) of the CDFA Grant Administration Regulations. Purchasing equipment that is not included in the approved Budget requires prior approval. Grant recipients must comply with applicable state requirements regarding the use, maintenance, disposition, and reporting of equipment per sections 303, 311, 324.1 and 324.2 of the CDFA Grant Administration Regulations. Refer to Section 330.1(c)(1) of the CDFA Grant Administration Regulations if costs will benefit both grant project activities and non-grant project activities.
Up to 30% of direct costs	<p>Indirect Costs</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Up to 30% of total direct costs may be used for indirect costs. Indirect costs are facilities and administrative costs that cannot easily be tied directly to the activities of the grant. Examples of common indirect costs include administrative/clerical services, rent, utilities, internet and telephone service, maintenance, and general office supplies. See Section 303(a)(36) of the CDFA Grant Administration Regulations. Applicants from the University of California or California State University may claim their agreed upon indirect cost rate with CDFA. These applicants must follow their established policies for calculating indirect cost rates. Please note that for projects with a non-profit fiscal sponsor, fiscal sponsorship fees may be allowable as an indirect cost, if charged consistent with the sponsored organization’s established policies. Fiscal sponsorship fees are <i>not</i> allowable as a direct cost.
	Track 2 Unallowable Costs
% of award	Description
0%	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Costs related to direct-to-consumer food distribution, such as direct delivery of food boxes to individuals or households. Refer to Section 330.1(c)(1) of the CDFA Grant Administration Regulations regarding costs that will benefit both grant project activities and non-grant project activities. Costs for contributions and donations from the grant recipient to other entities. See CDFA Allowable and Unallowable Items of Cost, section 6. Lease-to-own costs for real property and equipment. See CDFA Allowable and Unallowable Items of Cost, section 22b.

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Incorporation fees, business license fees, and other costs associated related to organizing a business or similar entity. See CDFA Allowable and Unallowable Items of Cost, section 17. • Costs for developing new agricultural products, such as new crop varieties • Costs of promotional items, memorabilia, gifts, souvenirs, and similar items, advertising and public relations that <u>are not directly related to the purpose or objectives of the grant program or grant award</u>. See CDFA Allowable and Unallowable Items of Cost, section 1.
0%	General CDFA unallowable costs. Please refer to the CDFA List of Allowable and Unallowable Items of Cost .
0%	Any costs incurred before or after the grant term. Any costs outside the project scope. Please note that prior approval from the CDFA is required for any changes to an approved project scope of work or budget once the agreement is fully executed. Failure to obtain prior written approval from the CDFA may result in denial of costs incurred.

1.7 Allowable Use of Income Generated during the Project

Some grant recipients are likely to generate income (e.g., by selling California food products) during the grant project term. Any gross income earned as a result of the grant award during the grant duration is referred to as “program income” ([Section 303\(49\) of the CDFA Grant Administration Regulations](#)).

Program income includes, but is not limited to, income from fees for services performed, the sale of commodities or items fabricated under the grant award, and license fees and royalties on patents and copyrights. For example, a grant recipient who sells California food products to a public institution as part of the grant project would be generating program income from the sales.

For the purposes of the Farm to Community Food Hubs Grant Program, grant recipients are allowed to reinvest program income into the project for which the grant was awarded and spend that income on allowable project costs that comply with the grant agreement terms and conditions. For example, income from food sales could be used to pay for the salaries of staff who are approved in the project budget and are directly working on the approved project. See [Section 1.6 Allowable and Unallowable Costs for both Track 1 and Track 2](#).

1.8 Reporting for Grantees

Track 1 Planning and Piloting Reporting

Beginning Interview	Core team members listed on the application will participate in an interview with CDFA staff. The interview will occur sometime between when the project is selected for funding and when the project begins. The purpose of the meeting will be to review the project plan, confirm roles, and provide early technical support to awarded projects.
Invoices	Submit monthly or quarterly invoices to the CDFA (utilizing a template that CDFA will provide) along with documentation to demonstrate proof of payment, detailing spending to be reimbursed for actual allowable costs incurred. If eligible and approved for an Advance Payment, submit regular invoicing in accordance with Advance Payment regulations.

<p>Quarterly Check-In Surveys</p>	<p>Submit quarterly check-in surveys to CDFA, summarizing project progress, successes, and challenges. The quarterly check-in surveys may request project photos, other storytelling media, quotes, and the following data:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The number and type of food producers engaged • The number and type of buyers engaged <p>If grantees are approved to use funds for community food hub piloting activities, the survey may also request information regarding:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Financial sustainability • The number and type, with respect to size and ownership, of farms from which food products were sourced • The number of farms using climate smart agricultural practices or production systems • The weight and/or units of food products sourced from each farm • The current number, type, and location of buyers served • The weight and/or units of food products sold and/or delivered to each buyer <p>CDFA staff will reach out and offer office hours to troubleshoot challenges with grantees.</p>
<p>Presentations</p>	<p>Grantees may also be requested to present to the California Farm to Community Food Hubs Working Group to share updates, successes, challenges, and other topics related to the funded project.</p>
<p>Annual Report</p>	<p>The annual report covers progress made during the first twelve months of project. The maximum grant term is 24 months, so one annual report will be due before the last day of the 13th month of the grant term. The report may request information regarding:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The number and type of food producers engaged • The number of new relationships made with food producers • The number and type of buyers engaged • The number of new relationships made with buyers • Project photos, other storytelling media, or quotes <p>If grantees are approved to use funds for community food hub piloting activities, the report may also request information regarding:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Financial sustainability • The number and type, with respect to size and ownership, of farms from which food products were sourced • The number of farms using climate smart agricultural practices or production systems • The weight and/or units of food products sourced from each farm • The current number, type, and location of buyers served • The weight and/or units of food products sold and/or delivered to each buyer
<p>Final Report</p>	<p>Grantees will use a template CDFA provides to submit a final report covering progress made during the entirety of the project and is due within 30 days of</p>

	<p>the termination of the grant agreement. Final reports must include any completed plan(s) that were funded by the grant award. The report may request information regarding:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The number and type of food producers engaged • The number of new relationships made with food producers • The number, type, and location of buyers engaged • The number of new relationships made with buyers • Project photos, other storytelling media, or quotes <p>If grantees are approved to use funds for community food hub piloting activities, the final report will also request information regarding:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Financial sustainability • The number and type, with respect to size and ownership, of farms from which food products were sourced • The number of farms using climate smart agricultural practices or production systems • The weight and/or units of food products sourced from each farm • The current number, type, and location of buyers served • The volume of food products sold and/or delivered to each buyer
Final Interview	<p>At minimum, the main point of contact listed on the application will participate in a final interview with CDFA after the grant term concludes to discuss project successes, challenges, and other relevant information. CDFA highly encourages all listed team members to attend, if possible.</p>

Track 2 Infrastructure and Operations Reporting

Beginning Interview	<p>Core team members listed on the application will participate in an interview with CDFA staff. The interview will occur sometime between when the project is selected for funding and when the project begins. The purpose of the meeting will be to review the project plan, confirm roles, and provide early technical support to awarded projects.</p>
Baseline Survey	<p>After the grant agreement has been fully executed, submit a pre-survey to CDFA at the beginning of the grant term to summarize and quantify pre-project activities. The pre-survey may request baseline metrics including but not limited to:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Financial sustainability • The current number and type, with respect to size and ownership, of farms from which food products are sourced • The current number of farms using climate smart agricultural practices or production systems • The current weight and/or units of food products sourced from each farm • The current number, type, and location of buyers served • The current weight and/or units of food products sold and/or delivered to each buyer
Invoices	<p>Submit monthly or quarterly invoices to CDFA (utilizing a template that CDFA will provide) along with documentation to demonstrate proof of payment,</p>

	<p>detailing spending to be reimbursed for actual allowable costs incurred. If eligible and approved for an Advance Payment, submit regular invoicing in accordance with Advance Payment regulations.</p>
<p>Quarterly Check-In Surveys</p>	<p>Submit quarterly check-in surveys to CDFA summarizing project progress, successes, and challenges. The quarterly check-in surveys may request metrics and information related to but not limited to:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Financial sustainability • The number and type, with respect to size and ownership, of farms from which food products were sourced • The number of farms using climate smart agricultural practices or production systems • The weight and/or units of food products sourced from each farm • The current number, type, and location of buyers served • The weight and/or units of food products sold and/or delivered to each buyer • Project photos, other storytelling media, or quotes <p>CDFA staff will reach out and offer office hours to troubleshoot challenges with grantees.</p>
<p>Presentations</p>	<p>Grantees may also be requested to present to the California Farm to Community Food Hubs Working Group to share updates, successes, challenges, and other topics related to the funded project.</p>
<p>Annual Report</p>	<p>Grantees will use a template CDFA provides to submit an annual report covering progress made during the previous 12 months of the project. The maximum grant term is 60 months. The last annual report will be due 12 months prior to the end of the grant term. Annual reports will request information related, but not limited, to:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Financial sustainability • The number and type, with respect to size and ownership, of farms from which food products were sourced • The number of farms using climate smart agricultural practices or production systems • The weight and/or units of food products sourced from each farm • The current number, type, and location of buyers served • The weight and/or units of food products sold and/or delivered to each buyer • Project photos, other storytelling media, or quotes
<p>Final Report</p>	<p>Grantees will use a template CDFA provides to submit a final report covering progress made during the entirety of the project. It is due within 30 days of the termination of the grant agreement. Final reports will request information related, but not limited, to:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Financial sustainability • The number and type, with respect to size and ownership, of farms from which food products were sourced • The number of farms using climate smart agricultural practices or production systems • The weight and/or units of food products sourced from each farm

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The current number, type, and location of buyers served • The weight and/or units of food products sold and/or delivered to each buyer • Project photos, other storytelling media, or quotes
Final Interview	At minimum, the main point of contact listed on the application will participate in a final interview with the CDFA after the grant term concludes to discuss project successes, challenges, and other relevant information. CDFA highly encourages all listed team members to attend, if possible.

1.9 Advance Payments or Reimbursements

This is a **reimbursement grant program**. If awarded a grant, recipients will pay for project-related costs up front during the grant term. Recipients must sustain those up-front costs until recipients submit an invoice and eligible costs are reimbursed by CDFA, pending invoice review and approval. Recipients must submit monthly or quarterly invoices to CDFA. In most circumstances, recipients will be reimbursed within 45 days after invoices are reviewed and approved. The grant agreement must be fully executed (signed by both parties) before project activities begin. **Please note** that costs related to activities performed before the grant agreement is fully executed are not eligible for reimbursement.

Grant recipients may be eligible to receive Advance Payments for project-related costs. Advance payments shall not exceed the amount necessary for project expenses for a three-month period and cannot reduce the project balance below 10% of the award amount. If eligible and approved for advance payment, recipients must follow the Advance Payment regulations according to [California Code of Regulations Grant Administration, Section 316.1](#). Please note there are specific requirements that apply to recipients that are 501(c)(3) nonprofit organizations, according to [California Government Code Title 2, Division 3, Part 1, Chapter 1, Section 11019.3](#).

2.0 Application and Review Process

2.1 Apply Electronically

The application is due on [date to be included in final RFA] by 5:00 pm Pacific standard time. CDFA will not accept late applications. Grant applicants must complete and submit applications electronically by a method that will be announced in the final Request for Application. Applicants are encouraged to use the resources available from CDFA described in [Section 3.0 Application Assistance and Questions](#).

The required application materials and templates can be downloaded from CDFA's [Farm to Community Food Hubs website](#).

- Application Submission Checklist (draft)
- The Track 1 Planning Piloting
 - Application Questions (draft)
 - Required Project Workplan template (draft)
 - Required Project Budget template (draft)
 - Optional Letter of Support template (draft)
- The Track 2 Infrastructure and Operations
 - Application Questions (draft)

- Required Project Workplan template (draft)
- Required Project Budget template (draft)
- Required Letter of Support Form (draft)

2.2 Grant Application Evaluation Criteria

Track 1 Evaluation Criteria

Applicants to Track 1 Planning and Piloting must complete an application containing the following components. Once CDFA determines a Track 1 application meets all requirements, reviewers will score a Track 1 application using the scorecard below. View the detailed [draft](#) application questions and the detailed [draft](#) review criteria for Track 1 on the [Farm to Community Food Hubs website](#).

Track 1 – Application Sections	Points Available
Applicant Information	No points available
Project Type	No points available
Dollar Amount Requested	No points available
Other Grant Awards	No points available
Project Summary	No points available
New Community Food Hub Priority	5 points
Project Team and Partnerships	25 points
Project Need	10 points
Objectives	20 points
Engagement Plan	15 points
Workplan and Budget	15 points
Letters of Support	10 points
Additional Applicant Information	No points available
Total	100 possible points

Track 2 Evaluation Criteria

Applicants to Track 2 Infrastructure and Operations must complete an application containing the following components. Once CDFA determines a Track 2 application meets all requirements, reviewers will score a Track 2 application using the scorecard below. View the detailed [draft](#) application questions and review the detailed [draft](#) review criteria for Track 2 on the [Farm to Community Food Hub website](#).

Track 2 – Application Sections	Points Available
Applicant Information	No points available
Dollar Amount Requested	No points available
Other Grant Awards	No points available
Project Title and Summary	No points available
New Community Food Hub Priority	5 points
Project Team and Partnerships	20 points
Project Need	10 points

Operations	10 points
Objectives	25 points
Workplan and Budget	15 points
Metrics	5 points
Letters of Support	10 points
Additional Applicant Information	No points available
Total	100 points

2.3 Application Review Process

Step 1: Administrative Review

CDFA will first conduct an administrative review to determine if applications meet all eligibility and application requirements. The administrative review may include evaluating the potential risk for non-compliance by an applicant or recipient with grant program requirements or grant agreement terms and conditions. During the administrative review, the following are grounds for disqualification:

- Lead applicant is an ineligible entity. See applicant eligibility and exclusions [in Section 1.4 Eligibility and Exclusions](#).
- Application is incomplete, has one or more unanswered questions, and/or includes missing, blank, or unreadable content.
- Application includes dates outside the allowable grant duration.
- Applications for less than the minimum award amount or more than the maximum award amount.
- Though application questions are completed, as a whole, the responses do not reflect a unified or feasible approach that meet the purpose of the Farm to Community Food Hubs Grant Program. See the [Section 1.1. Purpose](#).
- Applications with unallowable costs or activities. See [Section 1.6 Allowable and Unallowable Costs](#).
- Application is submitted after the submission period has ended.
- The lead applicant submitted multiple applications.
- Misrepresentations in the application.
- The entity does not agree to do all the required reporting activities for the funding track if awarded a grant. See [Section 1.8 Reporting for Grantees](#).
- The proposed project is duplicative of another proposed project (e.g., each propose to fund the same costs and project activities for the same entities).
- The entity previously received a grant award through other CDFA grant programs and the proposed project for the Farm to Community Food Hubs Program replaces rather than supplements their existing project.
- The entity previously received a grant award through other CDFA grant programs and is not in good standing with the State of California.

Applicants who receive a notice of disqualification from CDFA because of the initial administrative review may appeal the disqualification. See [Section 2.4 Appeal Rights](#).

Step 2: Technical Review using Evaluation Criteria

- Applications that pass administrative review will receive a technical review to evaluate the merits of the application. The technical review will score applications based on the evaluation criteria described in [Section 2.2 Grant Application Evaluation Criteria](#).
- CDFA reserves the right to ask applicants clarifying questions about their applications and to work with applicants to modify their proposals.
- CDFA reserves the right to utilize both technical review scores, alignment with program goals, and geographic diversity to determine awards.

Step 3: Award Notification and Feedback

CDFA will email all applicants regarding whether the applicant is selected for an award or not.

- **Grant Applications Due:** [date to be included in the final RFA]
- **Review Process:** [date to be included in the final RFA]
- **Award Notification and Announcement:** [date to be included in the final RFA]

Applicants not selected may request feedback from CDFA to identify the strengths and weaknesses of submitted applications. This information may be useful when preparing future grant proposals. CDFA reserves the right to provide this feedback orally or in written format. **Please note** that to receive feedback, applicants must request feedback within 10 calendar days of receiving a notification about their grant application status from CDFA. CDFA will provide additional information about feedback requests to non-selected applicants in the grant notification email.

2.4 Appeal Rights

Any discretionary action taken by the CDFA Office of Farm to Fork may be appealed to the CDFA Office of Hearings and Appeals within 10 calendar days of receiving a notice of disqualification from CDFA. The appeal must be in writing and signed by the responsible party named on the grant application or his/her authorized agent. It must state the grounds for the appeal and include any supporting documents and a copy of the CDFA Office of Farm to Fork decision being challenged. The submission must be sent to the California Department of Food and Agriculture Office of Hearings and Appeals, 1220 N Street, Suite 315, Sacramento, CA 95814 or emailed to CDFA.LegalOffice@cdfa.ca.gov. If submissions are not received within the time frame provided above, the appeal will be denied.

2.5 Call for Technical Reviewers

The technical review committee for the 2024-25 California Farm to Community Food Hubs Grant Program will consist of individuals from California state agencies and external partners who have expertise related to the funding track(s) they review.

- People who are interested in participating as a technical reviewer should complete the interest form at [insert link in final RFA]. For questions, please email cafoodhubs@cdfa.ca.gov.
- Technical reviewers should anticipate participating in the review process from [dates will be updated in final RFA] and spending two hours of review per application. The exact number of

applications someone is assigned will depend on how many applications CDFA receives and the technical reviewer's capacity.

- Applicants to the 2024-25 California Farm to Community Food Hubs Grant Program may not participate in the technical review process.

3.0 Application Assistance and Questions

3.1 Bi-Monthly Virtual Office Hours

Once the final Request for Application (RFA) is published and CDFA is ready to receive applications, CDFA will host virtual public "office hours" sessions on Zoom twice each month during the application period to answer questions about the grant application.

Recordings of the sessions will be posted on the program website. Find upcoming public "office hours" sessions on the website at [insert updated website link in final RFA].

3.2 Reviewing Draft Applications

CDFA is offering to review draft application materials for up to 20 eligible applicants that represent the following types of entities.

- California Native American Tribe
- Tribal-serving nonprofit organization
- Socially disadvantaged, beginning, limited resource, veteran, and/or disabled California food producer, as defined in [Section 1.2 Definitions](#). **Note:** applicants who speak limited English can participate in this service. CDFA will provide free language interpretation as part of understanding the application and providing applicants feedback on their draft applications. Applications must be submitted in English.

How this will work

- Draft materials will only be reviewed between [dates to be updated once final RFA is published].
- Once the final RFA is published and before applications are due, the types of eligible applicants listed above can use this online form [link to be updated in the final RFA] to request CDFA staff to review draft application materials and provide guidance on how to improve applications before submitting them for formal review.
- Applicants who choose to participate in this service can have draft materials reviewed twice and should be prepared to discuss feedback via a phone call or Zoom meeting with CDFA staff.
- Eligible applicants do not have to participate in this application assistance service.
- This will be a "first-come first-serve" system, meaning the first 20 eligible applicant groups to request this assistance will be the only ones CDFA meets with to review draft application materials.
- Applicants who do not or cannot participate in this service are encouraged to attend CDFA's virtual office hours and email staff at cafoodhubs@cdfa.ca.gov. [Virtual office hours](#) and emailing program staff is available for all applicants.

What reviewing draft application materials means

- Having draft application materials reviewed does not guarantee the application will receive more points during technical review nor guarantee the applicant will be offered the grant award.
- Staff assisting with reviewing draft application materials will not score those same applications once they are submitted for formal CDFA review.

CDFA staff reviewing draft application materials will:

- Provide free language interpretation for applicants that speak limited English
- Review draft application responses, draft workplans, and draft budgets two times
- Provide feedback to an applicant via phone call or virtual meetings (not by email)
- Provide guidance on how application materials could be improved to reflect an applicant's project vision
- Provide guidance on how application materials could better align with the application evaluation criteria
- Provide guidance on whether proposed costs are allowable or unallowable. CDFA provides this guidance to all applicants, whether they participate in this service or not.

CDFA staff reviewing draft application materials will not:

- Write any portion of the application
- Tell or suggest *how* an applicant should accomplish a project. Applicants and their partners know how best to accomplish a project based on their specific context.
- Conduct research on behalf of the applicant
- Provide direct edits to materials
- Be able to translate applications to English

4.0 CA Public Records Act

All grant applications and project information submitted by applicants and/or grant recipients to CDFA is subject to public disclosure. The California Public Records Act states that every citizen has the right to inspect and/or obtain a copy of any public record [[Government Code section 7920.000 et seq.](#)]. The CDFA Legal Office shall determine if the public record requested is exempt from disclosure. Public records must be disclosed unless exempt under the Government Code or other applicable law. You can review the CDFA Privacy Policy at <https://www.cdfa.ca.gov/privacy.html>

5.0 Other State Grant Opportunities

- For a comprehensive list of CDFA grant programs, please visit <https://www.cdfa.ca.gov/grants/>.
- For a complete list of California grant and loan programs, please visit the State Library's California Grants Portal: <https://www.grants.ca.gov/>.