



**New Jersey Commission on Science, Innovation and Technology**  
**The Food and Agriculture Research & Development Pilot Seed Grant Program**  
**Notice of Funding Availability**

The New Jersey Commission on Science, Innovation and Technology (“CSIT”) will launch an online application for the Food and Agriculture Research & Development Pilot Seed Grant Program at 9 am on April 12, 2024 at [www.njeda.gov/csit](http://www.njeda.gov/csit). Application will close on May 10, 2024 at 5 pm. The Food and Agriculture Research & Development Pilot Seed Grant Program has a total budget of \$375,180 for an estimated 5 grant awards of up to \$75,000 each. This is a competitive grant. No application, transaction, or termination fees will be collected by CSIT for this Program.

**Purpose**

The Food and Agriculture Research & Development Pilot Seed Grant Program (“Program”) supports innovation from researchers and entrepreneurs focused on developing technology and other solutions to addressing food insecurity in New Jersey (“NJ”). The Program will engage early-stage innovation-based companies to accelerate research and development of technologies into commercially viable products and services that address food insecurity needs of communities across NJ. The Program seeks to identify and implement ways to increase access to nutritious foods and develop new approaches to alleviate food deserts (referred to as an area with a lack of access to healthy, affordable food). Follow the link to see a list of current NJEDA New Jersey Food Deserts ([Food Desert Communities Designation](#)) The Program supports the development of innovative technologies within the target areas listed below.

The Program is focused on companies conducting research and development or testing technologies in the following target areas:

- Life Sciences (e.g., Next generation crop, soil health, indoor agriculture, and aquaculture)
- Technology (e.g., Digital services and platform development for improved food access, digital services to reduce food waste, digital platform to access emergency food and other services necessary for food security)
- Food and Beverage (Non-retail) (e.g., Improved connection between urban food systems and rural and urban communities to improve food access, increased capacity, and distribution of farm fresh products)
- Transportation and Logistics (e.g., online platform designed to facilitate business-to-business connections with local food systems to address disruptions to the local food supply, innovative food delivery models with reduced carbon footprint)

All applicants for the Program must provide proof of concept for their project proposed for



funding.

## Overview

The total funding of \$750,000 for the Program comes from New Jersey Economic Development Authority's ("NJEDA") Fiscal Year 2022 ("FY2022") appropriations for "Food and Agriculture Innovation" via a Memorandum of Understanding between NJEDA and CSIT. The Program is implemented by CSIT.

Of the total Program budget, \$375,180 remains for the current round of grants. The Program will award grants of up to \$75,000 to support an estimated five New Jersey early-stage innovation-based companies that have the potential to impact food and agriculture outcomes. Decisions on this grant award are expected to be made by the 3rd quarter of 2024.

## Program Details

Grants will be awarded on a competitive basis, with awards going to the highest scoring applicants provided the minimum score of 70 points is met.

Applicants can only submit **one** application for this grant. Multiple applications from the same company will NOT be accepted. If an applicant submits two applications, they must select which application moves forward for review and scoring.

Each grant will be valid for a period of twelve months, effective from the date of the execution of the grant agreement. Any unused approved grant amounts will be cancelled after the twelve-month period and returned to the CSIT program budget for future use. An extension of up to three months may be permitted at the discretion of CSIT.

Please note that CSIT if CSIT notifies a grant applicant of a budget error they may adjust and resubmit grant budgets to address the following issues: if:

- i. Submitted budget at the time of application exceeds the approved grant amount
- ii. Submitted budget at the time of application includes ineligible budgetary items as stated in notice of funding
- iii. Submitted budget at the time of application exceeds the 30% threshold, as stated in the notice of funding below under "Eligible Uses"
- iv. Submitted budget at the time of application does not include printed name of preparer and date

Applications with incorrect budgets that are not revised by June 5, 2024 will be rejected.



## Eligibility

Each applicant must meet the following eligibility criteria at the time of application and maintain eligibility during the entire review period in order to be eligible for an award:

- Be authorized and in good standing to conduct business in NJ as evidenced by a current NJ tax clearance certificate addressed to CSIT. All certificates listing another state agency will be rejected.
- Have no more than twenty-five full-time equivalent (“FTE”) workers (FTE calculated on a 35-hour work week) at the time of application.
- Have a minimum of one full time worker. A worker may be the founder and may be paid or unpaid.
- Conduct 50% or more of the cumulative hours worked by all workers, founders, and contractors in a New Jersey location (calculated on an FTE basis – 35 hrs. per week); and
- Have less than or equal to \$2,000,000 in 2023 calendar year sales revenue (excluding grant revenue).

## Eligible Uses

The grant funding can be utilized for project research and development activities.

In addition, the following expenses are eligible uses but cannot total more than 30% of the Project budget:

- Marketing and customer discovery specific to the innovation
- IP patent prosecution and licensing-related expenses
- Conference registration fees

## Ineligible Uses

The following expense categories are **ineligible** for funding by this grant:

- Direct services to individuals or organizations
- Manufacturing of products for sale or commercial use
- Real estate rental expenses
- Patient clinical trial expenses
- Construction costs
- Travel, entertainment, and other similar expenses
- General overhead expenses



- Expenditures incurred before the execution of the grant agreement
- Expenditures for equipment and materials that applicant does not use for the project during the project period
- Fees related to conferences not associated with the project

### **Disbursement of funds**

First disbursement will equal 80% of grant award on the effective date of the grant agreement. Second disbursement of 20% of grant award will be after Final Report is submitted and approved by CSIT.

### **Application Submission and Review Process**

All applications to the Program must include the following documentation:

- a. Completed online application
- b. Evidence that proof of concept has been achieved for the project. Submit **one** of the following:
  - Description of the proof-of-concept results
  - Published paper outlining results achieved
  - Successful completion of a federal SBIR/STTR grant or contract related to the project
  - Documentation from a university tech transfer office if the project relates to technology that has been developed at a university
- c. Budget and Milestone Proposals (Excel template embedded within online application)
- d. Employee information as appropriate for applicable company structure and staffing -i.e. most recent NJ WR-30 (W2 employees) or 1099 (contractors), Shareholder Agreement or K-1, or offer letters. Please note that if a Professional Employment Organization (“PEO”) is utilized, the applicant must submit confirmation of PEO-A form issued by the NJ Department of Labor (“DOL”). These confirmations are issued on an annual basis and are valid for a year. See <https://www.nj.gov/labor/ea/employer-services/leasing-companies/> for additional information on PEOs.
- e. Summary of most recent internal payroll (Q4 2023 or Q1 2024) indicating each employee name and number of hours worked per week.



- f. Most recent company tax filing: Federal 941 and either an NJ-CBT-100 (Schedule A), Form-1065 or Form -1040 (Schedule C) or whichever is applicable to the organizational form of the business, showing the total Gross Receipts or Sales for the year.
- g. Current NJ tax clearance certificate addressed to CSIT Tax clearance must be dated March 8, 2024 or after. [https://www16.state.nj.us/NJ\\_PREMIER\\_EBIZ/jsp/home.jsp](https://www16.state.nj.us/NJ_PREMIER_EBIZ/jsp/home.jsp) DUE No Later Than June 5, 2024 or application will be rejected.
- h. If applicable, copy of **Women and/or Minority** owned business NJ certification <https://www.njportal.com/DOR/SBERegistry/Default/> DUE No Later Than June 5, 2024 or relevant bonus points will not be awarded.
- i. If applicable, copy of **Veteran** owned business NJ certification DUE No Later Than June 5, 2024 or relevant bonus points will not be awarded.
- j. If applicable, a copy of **Executed University License Agreement** with University. DUE No Later Than June 5, 2024 or relevant bonus points will not be awarded.
- k. Complete Application Certification
- l. Completed CSIT Legal Debarment Questionnaire
- m. For companies with a d/b/a or “doing business as” name, we require proof of business registration for the d/b/a name.

The following steps detail the application submission process:

- A document completeness review will be done as applications are received.
- Applicants with missing documentation will be notified and given 10 business days to submit missing documents. If the application remains incomplete by the resubmission deadline, it will be rejected.
- Only complete applications will be evaluated and scored. Applicants must submit the NJ tax clearance certificate by June 5, 2024 otherwise, the application will be rejected. For any bonus points category, if the documentation is not received by the application scoring period, bonus points will not be applied.
- Denied applications may appeal CSIT’s declination, provided they do so within the timeframe provided in CSIT’s declination letter. Appeals must be written and include an explanation as to how the applicant has met all the eligibility criteria.

## Scoring

An evaluation committee comprised of CSIT and NJEDA staff will review and assign a score to each application, after receiving qualitative input from Subject Matter Experts (“SME”s). As part



of the process, all applicants with complete applications will be invited, but are not required, to make a brief presentation about their project and submit it to the evaluation committee and SMEs.

All applicants must achieve a minimum score of 70 (out of 100 points) in the following criteria to be eligible for a grant.:

- Innovation (up to 30 points)
- Market opportunity (up to 10 points)
- Implementation plan - budget and milestones (up to 20 points)
- Go-to-market strategy (up to 10 points)
- Economic and community impact (up to 10 points)
- Team (up to 20 points)

Bonus Points – Bonus points will be awarded to applicants that achieve the minimum score and are also:

- A company using technology initially developed at a NJ university, under an executed license agreement with such university (15 points)
- NJ certified women-owned business (10 points)
- NJ certified minority-owned business (10 points)
- NJ certified veteran-owned business (10 points)
- Primary place of business/research & development located within an opportunity zone eligible census tract or government restricted municipality (5 points)
- Has not previously received a CSIT grant or voucher (10 points)

Grants will be awarded to an estimated five applicants with the highest overall scores, provided the minimum score is met, until program funds are expended.

### **Board Approval**

The CSIT Program Committee will review scored applications and make funding recommendations to the CSIT Board. The CSIT Board will make final decision on grant award winners and declination on or about 3<sup>rd</sup> quarter 2024.

### **Fees**

No application, transaction, or termination fees will be collected by CSIT for this program.

### **Additional Information**

For two years from the date of the grant agreement, workers and consultants who continue working on the project must conduct at least 50% of their work in a New Jersey location. **Failure to comply**



**will trigger a requirement that the applicant make full re-payment of the grant award.**

All grant awardees must report economic impact data to CSIT upon the completion of the project and for an additional two years after project completion by submitting an “Economic Impact Questionnaire” provided by CSIT.

All grant awardees are encouraged to host one in-person interim site visit from the CSIT/NJEDA team or a virtual meeting to provide an update on their project.

All grant awardees are encouraged to commit to participate in future CSIT/NJEDA alumni activities, such as serving as a panel member or being interviewed about their program experience.

### **Confidentiality**

Applications received will be reviewed only by staff of CSIT and NJEDA and SMEs. All applications submitted may be subject to requests for public disclosure, including but not limited to requests pursuant to the Open Public Records Act ("OPRA"), N.J.S.A. 47:1A-1 et seq. If the applicant believes that information contained in its proposal merits confidential treatment pursuant to OPRA, any such purportedly confidential information submitted to CSIT must be specifically identified and marked by the applicant as such.

### **Contact Information**

All questions concerning this Notice of Funding Availability must be directed to CSIT by email to [csitfoodagr@njcsit.gov](mailto:csitfoodagr@njcsit.gov). All answers will be posted publicly in the form of a Frequently Asked Questions (FAQs) document which will be posted on the CSIT website prior to the application deadline.

Website: <https://www.njeda.gov/csit>.

Email: [csitfoodagr@njcsit.gov](mailto:csitfoodagr@njcsit.gov)

**The NJEDA is subject to State and Federal statutes including but not limited to the following which may impact affiliates:** N.J.S.A. 52:32-60.1, et seq., which prevents the New Jersey government entities from certain dealings with businesses engaged in prohibited activities in Belarus or Russia; N.J.S.A. 24:6I-49 which provides that the following are not eligible for most State or local economic incentives (a) a person or entity issued a license to operate as a cannabis cultivator, manufacturer, wholesaler, distributor, retailer, or delivery service, or that employs a certified personal use cannabis handler to perform work for or on behalf of a cannabis establishment, distributor, or delivery service; and (b) a property owner, developer, or operator of a project to be used, in whole or in part, by or to benefit a cannabis cultivator, manufacturer,



wholesaler, distributor, retailer, or delivery service, or to employ a certified personal use cannabis handler to perform work for or on behalf of a cannabis establishment, distributor, or delivery service; and N.J.S.A. 52:13D-12, et seq., which prohibits a member of the Legislature or a State officer or employee or their partners or a corporation in which they owns or controls more than 1% of the stock to undertake or execute any contract, agreement, sale, or purchase of \$25.00 or more, made, entered into, awarded or granted by any State agency, with certain limited exceptions.