



**New Jersey Economic Development Authority  
Atlantic City Food Security Grants Pilot Program  
NOTICE OF FUNDING AVAILABILITY**

The New Jersey Economic Development Authority (“NJEDA” or “Authority”) will begin accepting applications for the Atlantic City Food Security Grants Pilot Program (“Program”) on April 2, 2024 at 10:00 AM. Applications must be submitted by May 14, 2024 at 5:00 PM. The application can be accessed at: [Atlantic City Food Security Grants Pilot Program - NJEDA](#)

The Program will make available up to \$5.25 million in grant funding through a competitive application process to eligible applicants for projects that can have a positive impact for Atlantic City residents’ ability to access fresh, affordable, and healthy foods. There will be no application fee for the Program.

**Purpose and Overview**

In January 2021, Governor Phil Murphy signed the Food Desert Relief Act (FDRA), which allocated to NJEDA a total of \$240 million in tax credits over six years, and directed NJEDA to collaborate with the New Jersey Departments of Community Affairs and Agriculture to designate up to 50 Food Desert Communities (FDCs) across the state. These communities are home to more than 1.5 million residents and are in every county in New Jersey. The underlying data analysis allowed the FDCs to be ranked by a Composite Food Desert Factor Score, indicating the acuity or severity of their food desert status. The Atlantic City/Ventnor FDC ranks second highest of all 50 FDCs in New Jersey, indicating an extremely significant need. More than 41,000 people reside within the boundaries of the Atlantic City/Ventnor FDC, which covers the entirety of Atlantic City and a *portion* of neighboring Ventnor. In order to start initiatives to address FDCs and due to the immediate availability of SLFRF funds for Atlantic City, this pilot Program will focus on Atlantic City.

On October 12, 2023, the NJEDA’s Board approved the creation of the Atlantic City Food Security Grants Pilot Program, a \$5,250,000 program funded from the Economic Recovery Fund that will make grants for projects that will strengthen food access and food security in Atlantic City.

**Program Details**

The Program is designed to address the challenges faced by Atlantic City residents as it related to accessing fresh, affordable and healthy foods. Given the immediate need for improved, reliable and consistent food access in Atlantic City, the Program aims to fund and support 1) entities connecting Atlantic City residents with emergency food programs, 2) creation of programs, services, capital expenditure, or other assistance to entities serving disproportionately impacted households, populations in Atlantic City.

Program grants will be provided to government entities, not-for-profit entities, and for-profit entities that have been in existence for at least two years at the time of application and currently serve, in any manner, residents of the Atlantic City/Ventnor FDC. The grant funds will be awarded only to entities that indicate

that they will use the grant funds to improve the quality of life in Atlantic City by increasing food access and/or food security in Atlantic City. Acquisition of land or buildings is not an eligible cost. All other costs that are incurred after the date of grant agreement execution are eligible, subject to the Authority's approval of the project budget and supporting documentation

In order to provide grant funding to support all eligible projects, a maximum of one Project may be funded per eligible applicant. Grant funding will be allocated to the highest-scoring eligible applicants, proceeding in decreasing order of score until insufficient funds remain to fully fund the next eligible applicant. If funding still remains after approving all qualifying applicants from the initial application period, the application period may be re-opened for additional applications during an additional six-week application window.

### **Funding**

Funding for the Program will come from a \$5,250,000 program funded from the Economic Recovery Fund (ERF). The funding is comprised of \$4,000,000 in American Rescue Plan Coronavirus State Fiscal Recovery Funds (SLFRF) appropriated for "Atlantic City Initiatives" in the FY2024 Appropriations Act (P.L. 2023, c. 74). Additionally, (\$1,250,000) will be reallocated from the Food Retail Innovation in Delivery Grant Program from an FY22 appropriation of State funds for Food and Agriculture Innovation.

### **Eligibility**

Grants will be awarded only to entities that meet the following criteria at the time of application:

- Applicant is a for-profit, nonprofit, or government entity that has been in existence for at least two years at the time of application;
- Applicant currently serves, in any manner, residents of the Atlantic City/Ventnor FDC;
- Applicant can demonstrate *existing* programming or services related to food access and/or food security, including but not limited to: food distribution, nutrition education, local agriculture, and/or food retail (such programming may be different than the food security or food access activities proposed for the grant); and
- All applicants must be in substantial good standing at the time of application with the following New Jersey Departments:
  - Department of Labor and Workforce Development ("NJDOLE")
  - Department of Environmental Protection
  - Division of Taxation, as evidenced by a Tax Clearance Certificate
- Applicant is not subject to suspension or debarment in accordance with 2 CFR § 200.214 and its implementing regulations, including Executive Orders 12549 and 12689, 2 CFR part 180.

### **Eligible Uses**

Grant funding can only be used for *prospective costs* of the Project specifically approved based on the application, Authority review, and the grant agreement. Grant funds will be awarded only to entities that indicate that they will use the grant funds to improve food access and/or food security in Atlantic City.

The proposed use(s) must be accomplished within two years of execution of the grant agreement, subject to two 6-month extensions by EDA staff if the grantee is diligently pursuing the use and the delay was unforeseeable and not in the grantee's control, to the extent allowed under federal spending deadlines.

As required by law, construction, including use of trades in construction related to installation of equipment, will be subject to State affirmative action requirements for contractors. Such work with a cost of \$2,000 or more will be subject to New Jersey prevailing wage requirements and the Authority's prevailing wage and affirmative action requirements. Additionally, grantees must utilize contractors registered as a New Jersey Public Works Contractor with the NJDOL for work, subject to Prevailing Wage.

Awards will be subject to federal Duplication of Benefits requirements and, if construction is included, to cost reasonableness analysis.

Grant funding **cannot** be used for the acquisition of land or buildings as an eligible cost. All other costs that are incurred after the date of grant agreement execution are eligible, subject to the Authority's approval of the project budget and supporting documentation. For example, eligible costs include construction, equipment, installation, salaries and fringe, and rent.

### **Grant Amounts**

The minimum grant funding is \$50,000 per project. The maximum grant funding is \$500,000 per project. Grant funds may cover up to 100 percent of the proposed project costs. If grant funds from EDA are not requested to cover 100 percent of the proposed project costs, additional funding sources must be described in the budget and budget narrative submitted for approval.

The potential award amount is based upon current information about funding availability. NJEDA reserves the right to increase that amount and number of awards should additional funds become available.

### **Application Submission and Review Process (including Scoring)**

Applications for the Program will not be accepted after the deadline of May 14, 2024 at 5:00pm. To apply, an applicant must register, or log into the online application portal, complete all required application questions fully, and upload all required PDF documents.

NJEDA staff will review all applications for completeness and eligibility. At the sole discretion of the Authority, NJEDA staff may ask for more information for the application, including, but not limited to, responses, documentation, and attachments. Applicants will be given 10 business days to respond to these requests. The Authority reserves the right to provide two additional 10 business day cure periods if necessary. Should another cure period be provided, it will be provided to all applicants. If at the end of the cure period, or cure periods if two or three cure periods are provided, the applicant is non-responsive, the application will be deemed withdrawn. No applications will be scored until the end of any and all cure periods.

Each application must provide information about their organization and their proposed project, including, but not limited to:

- A detailed description of the proposed project, including its expected impact on FDC residents' food access and/or food security in Atlantic City. This description must include, at minimum, the following:
  - Description of current food security and food access needs and challenges in Atlantic City;

- Description of how the proposed project will address food access and food security in Atlantic City, particularly for SNAP and WIC recipients;
- Identification of other key stakeholders and description of how the applicant will collaborate with them;
- An implementation timeline and work plan. The work plan must include, at minimum:
  - Specific Measurable Achievable Relevant Time-bound (SMART) objectives;
  - Description of each project activity;
  - A project timeline, including milestones and the length of time needed to implement each activity within the grant period;
  - Identification of appropriate staff responsible for each project activity;
- A description of the organization's capacity to undertake the proposed project, including current and past experience a) serving residents of the Atlantic City/Ventnor FDC and b) providing programming or services related to food access and food security in Atlantic City and/or other parts of New Jersey;
- A description of community engagement efforts, which can include letters of support for the proposal; and
- A line-item budget and budget narrative for the proposed project scope. The requested level of funding must be broken down by line item. Line items must be clearly explained in the budget narrative. The requested level of funding must be reasonable for proposed activities within the project timeline. If the total project cost exceeds the requested grant amount, the budget narrative must describe the sources for all other funds.

**Note: Project viability and readiness to proceed/timelines are scoring factors and considerations. Applicants should provide as much detail as possible regarding the steps involved and projected timeline for the proposed project.**

For projects involving Construction Cost and Construction Related Cost, the following requirements must be met:

- NJDOL Public Works Registered Contractor/Subcontractor  
All contractors used for any construction costs of \$2,000 or more must be registered as a New Jersey Department of Labor and Workforce Development (DOL) Public Works Contractor Registered Contractor and must abide by NJ prevailing wage and affirmative action requirements. Any quotes submitted from contractors/subcontractors that are not NJDOL Public Works Registered Contractors at the time of application will not be eligible to be used in your proposed project.
- Professional Services  
All professional services, including, but not limited to, architectural, engineering, construction management services, must provide proof of a NJ Business Registration and a Verification of Professional Service form.

## Scoring

Applications that are incomplete, including those that do not provide responses to all required questions and those that do not meet the applicant eligibility criteria, will not proceed to scoring. Applications deemed complete will be reviewed and scored by an evaluation scoring committee that will be comprised of NJEDA staff. Applications will be scored on a scale of 0 - 100 points. To be considered for grant funding, a **minimum score of 50 out of 100 points** is required. Applications will be scored based on the following criteria:

- **Criteria # 1: Project Description/Statement of Work** (up to 30 points) – Factors considered include:
  - Applicant’s understanding of Atlantic City’s needs and challenges regarding food security and food access;
  - Potential impact of the proposed project on Atlantic City residents’ food access and/or food security;
  - Potential impact of the proposed project on food access for recipients of federal and state nutrition benefits, including SNAP and WIC;
  - Potential for project to be viable, sustainable, and adaptable to other Food Desert Communities;
- **Criteria # 2: Work Plan** (up to 20 points) – Applications will be evaluated based on factors, including:
  - Feasibility of work plan, as proposed;
  - Level of detail and evidence of thorough planning;
- **Criteria # 3: Organizational Capacity** (up to 20 points) – The applicant is equipped to successfully complete the proposed plan in a timely manner. Factors considered include:
  - Applicant’s experience providing programs or services related to food access and/or food security, including, but not limited to, food distribution, nutrition education, local agriculture, and/or food retail;
  - Applicant’s experience working effectively on collaborative, multi-stakeholder projects, as applicable for the proposed project;
  - Alignment of proposed project with applicant’s overall mission or primary line of business
- **Criteria #4: Community Engagement** (up to 20 points) – Factors considered include:
  - Depth of experience serving residents of Atlantic City;
  - A track record of seeking and responding to feedback from stakeholders, such as community members, customers, or advocates;
  - Efforts to ensure programs or services promote social and economic equity;
  - Ability to consider and mitigate obstacles that have created challenges for food security and food access in the past;
- **Criteria #5: Budget and Budget Narrative** (up to 10 points) – Applications will be evaluated based on level of detail, clarity of justification/explanation of budget, budget narrative with a clear connection to project goals and reasonableness.

Funding will be allocated first to the highest-scored applicant, proceeding in decreasing order of score to other applicants that meet the minimum score requirement of 50 out of 100 points, until insufficient funds remain to fully fund the next eligible application. If funding still remains after approving all qualifying

applicants from the initial application period, the application period may be re-opened for additional applications during an additional six-week application window. Applications received during that window will be reviewed and scored following the same procedure.

### **Grant Agreement**

Once a project is approved for funding, the Authority will enter into a grant agreement (“Grant Agreement”) with the applicant detailing the project to be funded, eligible Project costs, the amount of grant funding, and all financial programmatic requirements, including the amount of other funding as may be applicable. The Grant Agreement will detail timelines for both the Project and Project reporting. The proposed use(s) must be accomplished within two years of execution of the grant agreement, subject to two 6-month extensions, at the discretion of EDA staff, if the grantee is diligently pursuing the use and the delay was unforeseeable and not in the grantee’s control, to the extent allowed under federal spending deadlines. The applicant will be responsible for ensuring compliance of the Project with all terms and conditions of the Grant Agreement and the Program funding requirements.

### **Grant Funding Disbursements**

The Authority will disburse grants **only** to the applicant for the eligible and approved scope of work. Funds will be disbursed according to the following schedule:

- 50 percent of the grant will be disbursed upon execution of a grant agreement between NJEDA and the selected applicant;
- 25 percent of the grant will be disbursed upon the applicant’s submission of the mid-program report, the exact timing to be determined based on the grantee’s implementation plan and reflected in the grant agreement; and
- 25 percent of the grant amount will be disbursed upon the Authority’s review and approval of the applicant’s submission of a final report on completion of the proposed project, expected to be no later than two (2) years following the date of the grant agreement execution or September 30, 2026, whichever is earlier.

### **Post-Closing Compliance**

Grantees will be required to report to NJEDA at least quarterly, including mid-program and final reports, starting at grant execution and extending through the end of the grant term. These reports must provide updates on grantees’ progress against their proposed project timeline, data and outcomes on the project’s impact (e.g. number of people served), and project costs, both cumulative and since the last report.

NJEDA **shall recapture** any grant funds used for (1) an ineligible purpose or (2) any purpose outside of any approved scope of work.

### **Fees**

No application fees will be charged for this program, per NJEDA's fee rules.

### **Additional Requirements and Information**

Comprehensive information about the Atlantic City Food Security Grants Pilot Program is available at

[Atlantic City Food Security Grants Pilot Program - NJEDA](#)

Questions concerning this Program's Notice of Funding Availability should be submitted to [FoodSecurityGrants@njeda.gov](mailto:FoodSecurityGrants@njeda.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; Compliance with the list of "Specially Designated Nationals and Blocked Persons" promulgated by the Office of Foreign Assets Control (OFAC), <https://sanctionssearch.ofac.treas.gov>; 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.