



Atlantic City Food Security Grants Pilot Program Frequently Asked Questions

This Atlantic City Food Security Grants Program Frequently Asked Questions resource is intended to help anyone interested in program to better understand how the program works. This includes, but is not limited to potential applicants, state and local government officials, community members, community organizations, and other interested members of the public.

The questions and answers included here reflect the major features of the program, as well as questions the Atlantic City Food Security Grant Program staff commonly receive from the public.

This FAQ resource will be updated over time as additional questions emerge. Your contributions will help make this resource more useful. Please send any additional questions or comments to NJEDA staff at foodsecuritygrants@njeda.gov.

Program Basics

1. What is the New Jersey Economic Development Authority (NJEDA or the Authority)?

The NJEDA is the State's principal agency for driving economic growth, working to carry out Governor Phil Murphy's vision for a stronger and fairer economy. The NJEDA is committed to making New Jersey a national model for inclusive and sustainable economic development by focusing on key strategies to help build strong and dynamic communities, create good jobs for New Jersey residents, and foster innovation.

2. What is the Atlantic City Food Security Grant Program?

The Atlantic City Food Security Grants program is a pilot program awarding grants between \$50,000 and \$500,000 for projects to strengthen food access and food security in Atlantic City.

3. How and why was Atlantic City selected for this pilot program?

The Food Desert Relief Act directed NJEDA to work with the Departments of Community Affairs and Agriculture to develop a methodology to designate up to 50 Food Desert Communities (FDCs) across New Jersey. NJEDA's Board approved the methodology and the 50 designated FDCs in February 2022.

The Atlantic City/Ventnor FDC ranks second highest of all 50 FDCs in New Jersey, indicating extremely significant need. Notably, the Atlantic City/Ventnor FDC Average Food Desert Low Access Score (supermarket) is 97.4, which is higher — meaning more acute — than the FDC ranked highest in the state on composite score. More than 41,000 people reside within the boundaries of the Atlantic City/Ventnor FDC, which covers the entirety of Atlantic City as well as a portion of neighboring Ventnor.

4. How much funding is available as part of the Atlantic City Food Security Grant Program?

\$5.25 million in total funding is available. Applicants may request a grant amount from a minimum of \$50,000 to a maximum of \$500,000.

5. Where is the funding coming from?

Funding for the Atlantic City Food Security Grant program comes from the American Rescue Plan State and Local Fiscal Recovery Fund.

6. How many grants will be awarded?

\$5.25 million in total funding is available and will be awarded on a competitive, individual-project basis (see question 40).

7. Is this a grant or a tax credit?

This is a grant program, not a tax credit. NJEDA also offers the [Food Desert Relief Supermarket Tax Credit Program](#), aimed at supporting the development and operations of supermarkets across all 50 designated Food Desert Communities.

Project Eligibility

8. What types of projects are eligible to receive grant funding?

Grant funding must be used to improve food access and/or food security in Atlantic City, which may be accomplished in a number of ways. The below is a non-exhaustive list of potential projects to inspire creativity among potential applicants. Applicants may propose projects not captured by this list of examples.

- a. Establishing and/or operating a mobile grocery store or mobile produce market
- b. Purchasing equipment, such as cold storage equipment, for small retailers, community-based organizations, food banks, health care providers and/or emergency food providers
- c. Technical assistance and/or equipment to increase opportunities for Atlantic City residents to utilize nutrition benefits (e.g. Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program, Special Supplemental Nutrition Program for Women, Infants, and Children, Senior Farmers Market Nutrition Program, etc.), such as at a farmers' market, small or mid-sized food retailer, or through digital literacy training and assistance with online ordering for grocery delivery
- d. Increasing access to locally-grown produce for Atlantic City residents, including but not limited to expanding operation of a farmers' market within Atlantic City, establishing or strengthening relationships between farmers and retailers, or establishing or expanding produce delivery
- e. Working with restaurants in Atlantic City or Atlantic County to purchase meals that are provided at no cost to Atlantic City residents
- f. Expanding services that provide food at no cost to Atlantic City residents in need including increased operating costs associated with that expansion
- g. Accelerating existing planning and implementation efforts to broaden food access opportunities in Atlantic City

9. Can applicants propose projects not listed above?

Yes. Applicants may propose projects not captured by the above list of examples.

10. If the project involves food provision, are there minimum nutrition requirements that must be met?

No. Applicants should make reasonable best efforts to provide nutritious food when possible.

11. Are revenue-generating projects eligible for this program, for example, a corner store, farmers' market, or workshop series with paid entry?

Yes. Revenue-generating projects are eligible, so long as the budget submitted as part of the application indicates that income as one of the other funding sources for the project.

12. Does the proposed project have to be located in Atlantic City?

Proposed projects are not required to be physically located in Atlantic City. However, all projects must improve food access and/or food security in Atlantic City, and applicants must currently serve residents of the Atlantic City/Ventnor FDC to be eligible to apply.

Proposals will be scored based on criteria including the applicant's depth of experience serving Atlantic City residents and the project's expected impact on food access in the city. A strong scoring preference will be awarded to projects physically located in Atlantic City.

13. Can proposed projects also serve residents outside of Atlantic City?

Proposed projects must primarily benefit Atlantic City residents, but applicants are not expected to turn away customers from outside of Atlantic City. A strong scoring preference will be awarded to projects that have the greatest impact on improving Atlantic City residents' food access and/or food security.

14. Do proposed projects have to be new, or can grant funding be used to sustain pre-existing initiatives/operations?

Grant funding can be used to sustain pre-existing initiatives, provided all other criteria are met.

15. Can grant funds be used to support existing project planning, or projects currently in development?

Yes. Funding may be used to accelerate existing planning and implementation efforts to strengthen food access opportunities in Atlantic City.

Please note, the grant award can be used to cover only costs beginning from execution of the grant agreement. Costs incurred prior to grant execution may not be included in the project budget.

16. Are projects required to be completed by a certain date?

The proposed funding use(s) must be accomplished within two years of execution of the grant agreement, or September 30, 2026, whichever is earlier. Grantees may be granted up 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.

17. Can grant funding be used to cover costs associated with construction, equipment, installation, salaries, and/or rent?

Yes. Construction, equipment, installation, salaries, and/or rent are all eligible uses of funding, subject to the Authority's approval of the project budget and supporting documentation.

18. Will prevailing wage requirements apply for construction?

Yes. All contractors used for any construction costs more than \$1999 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.

19. Why do public works registered contractors have to be used?

By law, all contractors through this program must be Public Works contractors registered with the NJ Department of Labor. At a high level, this law guarantees that all contractors and subcontractors whose workers provide hands-on labor for a public works project will be paid prevailing wage. As a result, even if you have worked with a different contractor in the past, they must be a public works contractor/subcontractor, or you will be unable to work with them on this project.

20. What requirements is my contractor(s) subject to on this project?

Contractors must be registered as a New Jersey Department of Labor and Workforce Development (DOL) Public Works Contractor. More about Public Works Registered Contractors can be found [here](#).

- Contractors and their subcontractors must register at SAM.GOV and are subject to a debarment check
- Contractors must agree to pay prevailing wage, which is set by county and by construction trade
- Contractors with 4 or more total employees must abide by affirmative action requirements
- Contractors must only hire subcontractors that are also Public Works Registered Contractors

NJEDA reserves the right to also conduct site visits during construction to confirm that work is being completed in accordance with eligible uses for the Program, federal guidelines, and all prevailing wage and affirmative action requirements.

21. Can grant funding be used to acquire land or buildings?

No. Acquisition of land or buildings is not an eligible cost.

22. Do I have to pay back any of the grant?

No. Grant funding does not have to be repaid.

Applicant Eligibility

23. Who is eligible to apply for the grant program?

Grants will be awarded only to entities that meet the following criteria:

- a. Applicant is a for-profit, nonprofit or government entity that has been in existence for at least two years at the time of application;
- b. Applicant currently serves, in any manner, residents of the Atlantic City/Ventnor FDC;
- c. 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
- d. Applicant is in good standing with the NJ Department of Labor and Workforce Development and the Department of Environmental Protection.
- e. 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.

24. Does the applicant have to be headquartered/incorporated in Atlantic City?

No. However, the applicant must currently serve residents of the Atlantic City/Ventnor FDC. The program, product, or service currently provided to residents of the Atlantic City/Ventnor FDC does not need to be related to food access and/or food security.

25. My organization has been in existence for less than two years. Are we eligible to apply?

No. Applicants must have been in existence for at least two years at the time of application, as evidenced by formation documents.

26. Can private individuals apply for the grant program?

No. Applicants must be a for-profit, nonprofit or government entity that has been in existence for at least two years at the time of application.

27. Can restaurants, corner stores, and/or grocery stores apply for this program?

Yes. Entities engaged in food retail or distribution are eligible for the program, provided they meet all other criteria.

Application Process

28. When will the application open?

The application is currently under development and set to open in April 2024. Sign up for the [NJEDA newsletter](#) to be notified of program announcements and updates. The application will be available at <https://www.njeda.gov/atlantic-city-food-security-grants-pilot-program/>.

29. What is the deadline for applications?

An online application must be submitted by eligible entities, which will be launched in April 2024. The Atlantic City Food Security Grant Program application will remain open for six weeks.

30. Is this a first-come, first-served program?

No, this is not a first-come, first-served program. All applications submitted by the deadline will be reviewed after the application period is closed.

31. Is there an application fee?

No. There are no fees for this program.

32. What information is required in the application?

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

- A project description
 - A general 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:
 - A demonstrated understanding of Atlantic City's existing food access and food security needs and challenges
 - Description of how the proposed project will improve food access and food security in Atlantic City
 - Description of whether and how the proposed project will support SNAP and WIC recipients
 - Information related to the location of the proposed project and the number of Atlantic City residents that will be served
 - Description of how the proposed project could be sustained or scaled in the future
- Community engagement information
 - Description of the organization's current and past experience serving Atlantic City residents, including efforts to solicit community feedback, promote social and economic equity, and respond to challenges
 - Description of planned outreach and engagement activities related to the proposed project
 - Identification of other project partners and description of how the applicant will collaborate with them
- Organizational capacity information
 - Description of the organization's mission or primary line of business, and how the proposed project aligns
 - Description of the organization's experience providing services related to food access and food security, including as part of collaborative projects
- A scope of work
 - Work plan (template provided)
 - An anticipated project timeline
- A budget and budget narrative
 - A budget (template provided) and budget narrative (template provided)
 - Identification of contractors/subcontractors and/or professional service providers involved in the project

- Identification of estimated cost, and/or additional sources of funding

A sample application is available [here](#).

33. My project includes construction. What information will I need to provide in the application?

For each contractor/subcontractor used, applicants will be asked to provide the following information:

- Name of contractor
- Contractor quote
- Public Works Certificate
- NJ Business Registration Form
- NJ Small/Women/Minority/Veteran Business Enterprise (SWMBE) certification, if applicable
- Square footage of proposed construction site
- A detailed explanation of the proposed construction and any specialized equipment or materials required, if applicable

All contractors used for any construction costs more than \$1,999 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.

For each professional service used, including, but not limited to, architectural, engineering, and construction management services, applicants will be asked to provide the following information.

- Name of professional service company
- NJ Business Registration Form
- Professional Service Verification Form
- NJ Small/Women/Minority/Veteran Business Enterprise (SWMBE) certification, if applicable

34. What documents are needed at the time of application?

Applicants must submit a work plan, project budget, and budget narrative using the templates provided at <https://www.njeda.gov/atlantic-city-food-security-grants-pilot-program/>. Applicants must also submit their formation documents and New Jersey tax clearance certificate.

If the project involves construction, the applicant must provide a NJ Business Registration Form, Public Works Certificate, and NJ SWMBE certification (if applicable) for each contractor used, as well as a NJ Business Registration Form, Professional Service Verification Form, and NJ SWMBE certification (if applicable) for each professional service used. Please see question 33 for more information.

35. How does NJEDA define “services that promote social and economic equity”?

Applicants are encouraged to define this in a way that is relevant to their business or organization. NJEDA will take a broad approach to defining “social and economic equity” and reviewing and evaluating responses to this question.

36. I speak a language other than English; can I receive a translated version of the application?

For language assistance, please send your name, spoken language, and telephone number to NJEDA at languagehelp@njeda.gov to receive assistance completing the application.

37. How long will it take for applications to be reviewed? When can I expect a decision?

Grants will be disbursed on a competitive basis, and all scoring must be complete before awards can be announced. NJEDA will reach out to applicants to share an updated timeline.

38. Can my organization submit multiple applications?

Yes. However, applicants will be limited to one grant award per organization unless sufficient funds remain.

39. What happens if I forgot to submit a document or submitted something wrong? Will I have a chance to fix it?

Applications will first be evaluated for completeness and eligibility. Applicants that are missing required information will be provided an opportunity to cure those deficiencies before a final completeness and eligibility review.

Grant Awards and Usage

40. How will grantees be selected?

All complete applications will be scored by an internal EDA scoring committee based on the rubric identified in the program specifications approved by the Authority’s board, available [here](#). Applications must score at least 50 points out of 100 points to be considered for an award.

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.

41. What criteria will be used to score applicants?

Applications will be evaluated on the following criteria:

- Project Description/Statement of Work (up to 30 points)
- Work Plan (up to 20 points)
- Organizational Capacity (up to 20 points)
- Community Engagement (up to 20 points)
- Budget and Budget Narrative (up to 10 points)

The complete scoring rubric and scale are available beginning on page 14 of [this document](#).

The highest scoring applications (above 50 points) will be recommended for award until all funds are exhausted. Awards will be made directly to the highest scoring applicants.

42. Can grants be used to cover costs incurred after the date of grant agreement execution?

Yes. 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, costs can include construction, equipment, installation, salaries and fringe, and rent.

43. Can grants be used to cover the entirety of project costs?

Yes. Grant funds may cover up to 100 percent of the proposed project costs.

44. Can funds be sub-granted to other entities?

No. Grant funds cannot be sub-granted.

45. Can Atlantic City Food Security grants be used in conjunction with additional funding?

If the total cost of the proposed project exceeds the grant amount requested from NJEDA, additional funding sources must be described in the budget and budget narrative submitted for approval.

Project Implementation

46. How will grant funding be disbursed?

Selected applicants will enter into a grant agreement with NJEDA, and 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.

47. Will additional funding be made available to support projects long-term?

No. This is a one-time grant. However, the results of this pilot program may inform future NJEDA program development. NJEDA currently offers a variety of other grant and tax credit programs aimed at supporting food security in New Jersey. Learn more [here](#).

48. What reporting will be required and at what frequency?

Grantees must submit a mid-program and final report. The exact timing of the mid-program report is to be determined based on the grantee's implementation plan and reflected in the grant agreement. The final report must be submitted upon 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.

Other Questions

49. Will NJEDA offer this program in other food desert communities?

The Atlantic City Food Security Grant Program is a pilot program that aims to support projects that have the potential to be scalable and adaptable to other Food Desert Communities.

NJEDA currently offers other programs available to all 50 designated Food Desert Communities, including the [Food Desert Relief Supermarket Tax Credit Program](#), aimed at supporting the development and operations of supermarkets in FDCs, and the [Food Retail Innovation in Delivery Grant \(FRIDG\) Program](#), which provides grant funding to New Jersey food retailers to purchase self-contained, temperature-controlled lockers located in FDCs.

50. Who do I contact for additional questions?

Potential applicants may reach out to CustomerCare@njeda.com, call (844) 965-1125, or use the Customer Care chat feature found on the NJEDA website. Additional questions, comments, and inquiries can also be directed to foodsecuritygrants@njeda.gov.

51. Will there be any information sessions or webinars for the Atlantic City Food Security Grant Program?

An informational webinar was held on Zoom in March and recorded. The webinar recording and slides are available at <https://www.njeda.gov/atlantic-city-food-security-grants-pilot-program/>.