

Rural Health Transformation Program (RHTP) Initiative 1.2 Make Rural Nebraska Healthy Again Through Food as Medicine Frequently Asked Questions (FAQ)

1. Can local governments apply as a fiscal agent?
 - a. Local governments may apply as a fiscal agent.
2. Is there a maximum number of entities that organizations can be a fiscal agent for?
 - a. No. However, there may be limits due to the administrative cost cap and the limit on individual awards.
3. What is the definition of a food cooperative?
 - a. A food cooperative (food co-op) is a grocery business that is owned and democratically controlled by its members, rather than by private investors or a single owner.
4. Can a grocery store be a food cooperative?
 - a. Yes. A regular grocery store becomes a food cooperative if:
 - It is member-owned;
 - It operates under democratic governance; and
 - Profits benefit members rather than outside shareholders.If a store is privately owned or part of a chain, it is not a cooperative even if it sells local or organic food.
5. Are out-of-state partners eligible to be funded as a result of this RFA?
 - a. The preference is to fund Nebraska entities. The population served with the funds must be within the state.
6. What is the definition of equipment? How is equipment disposed of?
 - a. Equipment is defined at Title 2 Code of Federal Regulations (CFR) 200.1. The requirements for use, management, and disposition of equipment is defined at Title 2 CFR 200.313.
7. Is a program required to provide fresh food?
 - a. The purchase of food is prohibited with these funds. The funding must be used to meet the strategic goals and for the initiative outcomes identified in the request for applications for Initiative 1.2. NOTE: The strategic goals and outcomes focus on healthy food access not only fresh food. See below.
 - Strategic goals:
 - Reduce obesity risk;
 - Improve access to healthy foods; and
 - Reduce access to processed foods.

- Initiative Outcomes:
 - Build or strengthen sustainable partnerships between eligible entities and schools.
 - Improve healthy food access for students and their families through increases to entity infrastructure and capacity.
8. Must the entity's address be in one of the rural or frontier counties to apply?
- a. No. An entity is not required to be located in a rural or frontier county to be eligible. An entity that serves rural or frontier populations may be eligible. If an entity is in an urban county, it must clearly identify how rural and frontier counties will be served within its application.
9. Can funds be used for the processing costs of meat?
- a. Funds cannot be used for the costs of purchasing, packaging, or processing food products. Funds may be used for:
- Investments toward cold storage, delivery, equipment, and community gardens, including food safety supplies and equipment.
 - Technology needed to maintain adequate records and data, such as food received, food distributed, food stored, households served, volunteer coordination, staffing coordination, training, safety of the location for clients and staff, food safety, and nutrition education and training.
 - Investments in developing "last mile" logistics systems to strengthen connections between participating small rural producers and local school systems through equipment to supply fresh foods, ensuring efficient and reliable food distribution.
10. What are considered administrative costs?
- a. Administrative costs support administration rather than initiative delivery (e.g., fiscal/reporting support, monitoring, audit, administrative contracts). This includes direct and indirect administrative costs. Indirect costs or F&A charges count fully toward the administrative maximum.
11. Are matching funds required for this grant?
- a. No.
12. Can funds be used to purchase allowable equipment that exceeds \$80,000?
- a. Yes. The budget must reflect the amount being requested in RHTP funds. However, the total cost of the item and the funding that will be used for the remainder of the cost must be identified and supporting documentation provided. The detailed budget narrative should explain the total amount and how the remaining costs will be paid. The expectation is transparent budgeting plus verifiable financial capacity.
13. Do applicants need to have a SAM.gov account to apply for these funds? Do applicants need to have a unique entity identifier (UEI) number at the time of application for these funds?
- a. To be an eligible entity, an entity must have an active registration in SAM.gov and have a UEI, unless an exemption is met per 2 CFR 25.110. An application can be accepted from an entity without a UEI; however, if an entity does not meet an exemption, an award cannot be issued until a UEI has been obtained.

14. Can funds support work that is already being conducted?
 - a. RHTP funds cannot be used to supplant existing work. If the proposed project continues or expands existing efforts, include a detailed justification explaining how the proposed work does not overlap with or supplant existing activities, and how it will be tracked.
15. Will priority or preferential scoring be given to protein producers?
 - a. The RFA does not prioritize protein producers. The scoring methodology is identified in Section 2.1 (Application Scoring) of the RFA. Applicants should carefully explain how their proposed project aligns with the program's stated goals and outcomes, as this alignment will be a key factor in how applications are evaluated.
16. Is a Nebraska school/school program eligible to receive funds?
 - a. Schools are not eligible for funds through this RFA. However, funds will be made available for schools through other RHTP initiatives. Please see <https://dhhs.ne.gov/Pages/Rural-Health-Transformation.aspx> for a release of funds projected timeline from other RHTP initiatives. It is recommended that interested applicants subscribe to the aforementioned website for updates.
17. Will there be concerns if a recipient receives funding but does not partner with schools?
 - a. Yes. Applicants who do not already have established partnerships with schools or who cannot demonstrate a high level of readiness to partner with schools are not considered eligible. As part of the application, applicants must provide clear evidence of their readiness to work with schools.
18. Is purchasing a greenhouse/high tunnel or other season extension equipment allowable with these funds?
 - a. This equipment may be allowable if it achieves the goals and outcomes of these funds (necessary), is reasonable, and allocable. The use of the funds must be clearly identified in the work plan and budget and allowable per 2 CFR Part 200.
19. Will there be multiple rounds of funds for initiative 1.2? If yes, will recipients of rounds 1 funds be able to apply for future rounds of funds?
 - a. The RHTP application requested five rounds of funds for initiative 1.2; however, the receipt of additional funds will be contingent on the ability to achieve the goals and outcomes of the initiative in a timely manner. Recipients of round 1 funds could be eligible for future funds.
20. Will fiscal agents distribute funds through contracts or subawards?
 - a. DHHS will abide by 2 CFR 200 regarding the distribution of funds through a contract or subaward. The CFR is the official legal print publication containing the codification of the general and permanent rules published in the Federal Register by the departments and agencies of the federal government. The Electronic Code of Federal Regulations (eCFR) is a continuously updated online version of the CFR. It is not an official legal edition of the CFR.
21. The RFA states construction is unallowable. What is the definition of construction?
 - a. Under RHTP, "construction" means work on a building or structure that creates, expands, significantly improves, or materially extends the value or useful life of real property. That kind of "construction" is unallowable. By contrast, minor alterations or renovations tied to the approved project may be allowable, as may equipment upgrades.

22. Can a refrigerated truck be purchased with the funds and used for other purposes in addition to partnering with schools?
- a. Yes. To be eligible, an entity must have established partnerships with schools or have a high level of readiness to partner with schools. However, entities may use the purchased equipment for other purposes that align with the RFA's goals and outcomes.
 - Strategic goals:
 - Reduce obesity risk;
 - Improve access to healthy foods; and
 - Reduce access to processed foods.
 - Initiative Outcomes:
 - Build or strengthen sustainable partnerships between eligible entities and schools.
 - Improve healthy food access for students and their families through increases to entity infrastructure and capacity.
- Federal regulations require that costs must be assigned to an award in proportion to the benefit received.
- Example: If a refrigerated vehicle is used 70% of the time to support the goals and objectives identified in the RFA and 30% for other activities, only 70% of the vehicle's cost may be charged to the grant.
23. Is a Mill considered equipment for this RFA?
- a. Under federal rules (2 CFR 200.313), "equipment" means a tangible item with a useful life of more than one year and a per-unit acquisition cost of more than \$10,000. If an item does not meet that threshold, it may be treated as a supply (or another type of cost). Thus, it may be allowable if it is used for purposes that align with the goals and outcomes of the RFA. NOTE: Funds cannot be used for any construction or real property purchase that would be associated with a mill.
24. Is it allowable to use funds to increase infrastructure related to mushrooms as they are considered a fungus and not a vegetable?
- a. Yes. Mushrooms meet the definition of "other" vegetable that contributes to the vegetable subgroup requirements.
25. Value-added producers work with local farms to promote/prepare local foods. Are value-added producers eligible applicants for this RFA?
- a. A value-added producer may be eligible. A final determination will be made based on the review of the work plan and fiscal workbook.
26. Is an insurance certificate required for this RFA?
- a. The RFA does not require applicants to submit an insurance certificate. If we intend to require proof of insurance, that will be addressed in the agreement terms.
27. How long does DHHS anticipate it will be before applicants are notified of awards?
- a. An intent to award is projected to be released by the end of May 2026.

28. Who will review the RFA applications?
 - a. DHHS will review applications.

29. Is a meat processor/meat locker an eligible entity?
 - a. A meat processor or meat locker may be eligible. A final determination will be made based on the review of the work plan and fiscal workbook.

30. How would a fiscal agent complete the work plan and financial documents if it represents several eligible entities?
 - a. The fiscal agent must provide information regarding the use of funds by each of the eligible entities within the workplan and fiscal workbook.

31. Is specific documentation required to demonstrate a readiness to partner with schools?
 - a. Any supplemental documentation that reasonably establishes the partnership between the entity and the schools is acceptable.

32. Since the agreements will be backdated to January 1, 2026, would costs incurred between January and the award date be eligible for reimbursement?
 - a. The RFA does allow for reimbursement of otherwise allowable costs back to January 1, 2026, because that is the stated start of the period of performance. But applicants should be aware that DHHS cannot actually pay those costs until the agreement is fully executed, so any pre-execution spending is not guaranteed.

33. If a bridge loan is needed to handle the expense reimbursement process, is the cost of such a loan (i.e., time spent securing a loan, interest paid, etc.) an allowable expense?
 - a. The funds can be used for the cost of equipment, but not for any other costs.

34. Are entities permitted to serve schools within urban counties?
 - a. Entities must identify how funds will be used to serve rural or frontier counties. The following five counties in Nebraska are not rural or frontier counties: Dakota, Douglas, Hall, Lancaster, and Sarpy. All other counties are considered rural or frontier.

35. What constitutes “satisfactory progress” for an awardee to avoid penalties?
 - a. The agency must use the funds as approved in the workplan and fiscal workbook and meet the identified performance metrics.

36. If an entity receives an award, how frequently can reimbursement be requested?
 - a. Reimbursement can be requested quarterly.

37. On line 92 of Form 1, there is a large text box, but it is formatted as individual cells. How can this be adjusted to allow text entry across the entire box?
 - a. Form 1 has been updated to fix this.

38. One of the application scoring criteria is “Impact on expected outcomes.” Does this refer to the outcomes listed in the RFA (e.g., building sustainable partnerships and improving healthy food access)?
- a. Yes.
39. Is funding able to be used for costs such as a refrigerated vehicle to transport produce from a local farm to an aggregator that then distributes to schools, rather than supporting a direct farm-to-school connection?
- a. As long as the purposes align with the goals and outcomes of the RFA, this could be allowable.
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 - Initiative Outcomes:
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- Federal regulations require that costs must be assigned to an award in proportion to the benefit received.
- Example: If a refrigerated vehicle is used 70% of the time to support the goals and objectives identified in the RFA and 30% for other activities, only 70% of the vehicle’s cost may be charged to the grant.
40. What is the appropriate way for an entity to sign the application?
- a. DHHS will accept a typed name on the signature line.
41. Are there specific requirements to be recognized as a fiscal agent for this program?
- a. To be considered as a fiscal agent, an application must be submitted that identifies the entities they will be a fiscal agent for.
42. Why are there categories in the financial workbook that do not appear to be relevant to this funding opportunity?
- a. The financial workbook is a template that is being used for all RHTP initiatives. Therefore, not all categories are relevant for every initiative. For this initiative, the RFA identifies allowable uses for the funds.

Questions regarding the program and applications should be sent to:

DHHS.RHTP1@nebraska.gov

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