



Food Security Research & Innovation Projects – Collaborating to Advance School Meal Equity (CASE)

NOTICE OF FUNDING AVAILABILITY

May 27, 2026

I. Funding Opportunity Overview

The New Jersey Office of the Food Security Advocate (OFSA) announces the availability of **\$976,758 in state funding** through a competitive **Public/Private Partnership Grant** to support food security research & innovation initiatives through the NJ Office of the Food Security Advocate (OFSA). This funding opportunity is authorized under a FY26 State Budget supplemental appropriation for *Food Security Research & Innovation* and is intended to operationalize a public–philanthropic partnership that advances food security through expanded access to federal subsidized school meal program under the National School Lunch (NSLP) and Breakfast (SBP) programs, as well as the Child and Adult Care Food program (CACFP).

This Notice of Funding Availability (NOFA) supports the establishment of a grant-giving entity that will work collaboratively with OFSA for the provision of grants, providing leadership, administration, and operationalization, ensuring these grants funds support partners and activities that advance the utilization of and participation in school meals across New Jersey.

II. Statutory Authority and Alignment

Funding is authorized pursuant to a FY26 Supplemental Appropriation whose language stipulates that:

“The amount hereinabove appropriated for Food Security Research and Innovation shall be used by the Office of the Food Security Advocate to design and implement research projects, pilot programs, public-private partnerships, and grant programs within the State. Research projects and programs shall be designed by the Office of the Food Security Advocate based on identified needs derived from strategic planning and previous research and evaluation that has been conducted by the Office of the Food Security Advocate. Research projects shall be determined by the Executive Director of the Office of the Food Security Advocate in accordance with the Office of the Food Security Advocate's strategic plan.”

This opportunity is also aligned with OFSA’s statutory purpose **under N.J.S.A. 52:27J-3** and the **New Jersey Food Security Strategic Plan** (December 2025), particularly Focus Area 3 *Build and Support Local Partnerships to Advance Community-Driven Food Security Approaches*:

1. **Tailored Education, Outreach, and Awareness Efforts:** Launch new, and support existing, community-informed education, outreach, and awareness efforts to increase participation in local food security programs and build trust and partnerships with populations with lived and living experiences of food insecurity
2. **County-Level Coordination:** Support action-oriented local food coalitions through county-level coordination that brings together partners across sectors to align food security efforts, develop and implement localized strategies, and share funding opportunities.
3. **Bi-directional Community Engagement:** Establish consistent bi-directional community engagement mechanisms that feed into strengthening coordination between local and state food coalitions to inform decision-making and support implementation of long-term innovative and scalable food security strategies.
4. **Screening and Referrals:** Provide cross-sector data integration, resources, technical assistance, and training to organizations on screening for program eligibility/need and providing closed-loop referrals to services

III. Purpose of Funding

The purpose of this funding is to establish **two grant funding** opportunities in support of expanded access to nutritious school meals via NSLP/SBP or CACFP:

- \$400,000.00 to support the expansion and adoption of Breakfast After the Bell programs including Second Chance Breakfast, Grab and Go, and Breakfast in the Classroom
- \$576,758.00 to increase access to school meals including:
 - Expanded utilization of New Jersey’s 2024 expansion of income eligibility for free school meals
 - Expanded opt in of non-public schools into NSLP and SBP overcoming misconceptions around in eligibility
 - Increase rates of school meal application completion and submission
 - Reduce rates of school meal debt across the state

- Increase utilization of CACFP among early childhood care providers and among PreK-12 schools. This includes:
 - Lunches and snacks in early childhood education sites
 - Snacks for after-school programs in PreK-12 sites
 - At Risk Suppers in eligible PreK-12 schools
- Both funding pools capitalize on the utilization of school meal programs as a mitigator in reducing the impact of H.R. 1 on New Jersey households across the state
- Results of funded grants will be used in developing best practices to further increase utilization of school meal programs beyond the funding periods

IV. Funding Amount and Term

- **Total State Funding Available:** \$976,758.00
- **Required Match:** \$0.00
- **Total Anticipated Pilot Resources:** \$976,758.00
- **Grant Term:** Upon execution through June 30, 2027
- **Funding Structure:** State funds will be deployed through a formal Memorandum of Agreement (MOA) between OFSA and the selected philanthropic partner.

V. Eligible Applicants

Eligible applicants must meet **all** the following criteria:

- Be a US-based philanthropic organization, pooled fund, fiscal intermediary, or similar entity with demonstrated experience in:
 - Managing multi-funder philanthropic resources;
 - Issuing and overseeing grants or subawards; and
 - Supporting food systems, agriculture, food security, or related community-based initiatives.
- Have the capacity to administer, review, disburse, and manage funds specific to the two grant funded opportunities.
- Demonstrate the ability to comply with state fiscal, reporting, and accountability requirements.

Partnerships or consortia are permitted, provided one entity is designated as the lead applicant and fiscal agent.

VI. Allowable Uses of Funds

State philanthropic funds may be used to support school meal access expansion activities specific to the two funding pools mentioned prior as per request for proposals to be developed by OFSA that will be managed, administered, and operationalized by the grantee as outlined in the section on roles and responsibilities.

VII. Roles and Responsibilities

OFSA Responsibilities

- Provide Request for Proposals (RFPs) for both funding pools in coordination with the grantee specifying the grantee's role in sub-granting and the administration of the grants fund
- Provide strategic direction and oversight for the subawards;
- Ensure alignment with budget language, the Food Security Strategic Plan, and state financial practices;
- Monitor performance, reporting, and evaluation activities; and
- Coordinate with the Division of Budget and Accounting for fiscal compliance.

Selected Partner Responsibilities

- Administer grant funds in accordance with the MOA, OFSA guidance, and the OFSA-authored RFPs;
- Implement transparent grantmaking including statewide announcements of funding opportunities utilizing various methods and platforms;
- Track and review applications; score applications based on OFSA-provided rubrics; grant sub-awards;
- Coordinate the communication of sub-awards with OFSA;
- Track reporting and expenditures; share requests for technical assistance with OFSA;
- Consolidate and develop final reports for both funding pools based on report submission and expenditures with learnings and recommendations for future funding opportunities; and
- Participate in evaluation and assessment activities as required by OFSA or may take the lead based on the capabilities of the grantee.

VIII. Evaluation and Reporting Requirements

The selected partner will be required to:

- Submit consolidated fiscal and programmatic reports to OFSA on a quarterly basis;
- Track outputs and outcomes related to the two funding pools based on the stage in which sub-grantee is at;
- Participate in OFSA-led evaluation activities designed to assess impact, equity, and scalability; and
- Contribute to a final summary report for each funding pool documenting lessons learned and recommendations for future expansion.
- BEANS will be administered by the New Jersey Office of the Food Security Advocate (OFSA) with support from the NJDA fiscal team. Grantees are required to track monthly expenses and retain receipts, which must be made available upon request. Grantees are required to submit quarterly financial reports. Documentation must be retained for three years from the date of submission of the final financial report.

IX. Application Requirements

Applications must include, at minimum:

1. Organizational overview and relevant experience
2. Plan for disseminating RFPs, collecting applications, scoring, and awarding
3. Proposed approach to communicating awards to the public
4. Fiscal management and reporting capacity
5. Proposed evaluation plan around report and financial submissions
6. Evaluation and learning approach
7. Proposed timeline

Send application materials in a single (combined) PDF file to ofsa@ag.nj.gov by Wednesday, June 24 at 5pm ET.

X. Review and Selection Criteria

Applications will be evaluated based on:

- Alignment with statutory mandate and strategic plan focus areas;
- Strength and feasibility of the public–private partnership model;
- Capacity to manage and administer the two funding pools;
- Demonstrated fiscal and programmatic accountability;
- Commitment to equity, transparency, and learning; and
- Readiness to deploy funds within the timeframe.

Final award decision will be announced by OFSA on June 30, 2026 but may be subject to change based on number of applicants.

XI. Anticipated Timeline

- **NOFA Release:** May 27, 2026
- **Question & Answer Period:** May 27, 2026 – June 3, 2026
- **Question & Answer Document Release:** June 4, 2026
- **Applications Due:** June 24, 2026
- **Anticipated Award Announcement:** June 30, 2026

XII. Contact Information

Please submit any questions and application responses to:

New Jersey Office of the Food Security Advocate (OFSA)

OFSA@ag.nj.gov