



NJ Food Security Research Support & Technical Assistance

REQUEST FOR APPLICATIONS (RFA) DUE: July 17th, 2026 at 5 PM ET

Background & Purpose

In 2022, New Jersey became the first state in the nation to establish an [Office of the Food Security Advocate \(OFSA\)](#) within its executive branch, signaling a statewide commitment to advancing coordinated, equity-centered, and data-informed approaches to food security. Since its establishment, OFSA has worked to strengthen cross-sector collaboration, elevate lived expertise, align statewide efforts, and advance a broader understanding of food security that extends beyond traditional economic measures.

As part of these efforts, OFSA adopted the [Six Dimensions of Food Security framework](#) (*access, availability, utilization, stability, agency, and sustainability*) as the foundation for its strategic planning and statewide coordination efforts. The six dimensions framework recognizes food security as a complex and interconnected social condition shaped by economic, environmental, social, structural, and policy factors. In 2024–2025, OFSA implemented the state's first large-scale data collection initiative grounded in the six dimensions framework. Findings from the [Exploring the Six Dimensions of Food Security in New Jersey report](#) informed development of the New Jersey Food Security Strategic Plan and established an important baseline for future statewide measurement and planning efforts. OFSA will continue its efforts to deploy the [New Jersey Food Security Strategic Plan](#) as part of its legislative mandate to coordinate statewide food security efforts.

In addition to the strategic plan, OFSA also has a legislative mandate to increase awareness of and utilization of school meals. School meal programs including the National School Lunch (NSLP), School Breakfast Program (SBP), and the Child and Adult Care Feeding Program (CACFP) are an underutilized but essential tool in reducing statewide food insecurity. Providing as many as three meals a day plus snacks, school meals and childcare meals may be one way in which New Jersey families mitigate the impact of H.R. 1 as many families may face reduced benefits and/or access to programs such as the Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program and New Jersey Family Care. Additionally, ensuring our students have access to nutritious school and childcare meals reduces the potential burden on the charitable food sector, allowing them to focus outreach and support on families with no school-aged children.

To execute both of these legislative mandates, OFSA is seeking a vendor to provide technical assistance, design support, and research support to initiatives associated with the statewide strategic plan and school meals. This support is needed to ensure that OFSA continues to create high quality, front-facing, dissemination materials while also maintaining its consistent brand identity and high quality of research and technical assistance that the office provides to New Jersey.

Intended Outcomes

Intended outcomes of the NJ Food Security Research Support & Technical Assistance project include:

- Advance implementation, evaluation, and dissemination of the New Jersey Food Security Strategic Plan and related implementation efforts through the development of research materials and accompanying documents and associated resources for external use.
- Strengthen the ability of state agencies, community organizations, coalitions, grantees, and local partners to implement and evaluate food security initiatives through technical assistance, development of materials that incorporate the Six Dimensions of Food Security and the NJ Statewide Food Security Strategic Plan, and consultation with the OFSA team
- Strengthen the ability of state agencies, community organizations, coalitions, grantees, and local partners to implement recommended strategies and programming generated by OFSA to increase awareness of and utilization of school meals in New Jersey
- Expand public-facing food security resources, communications materials, and research translation products that support data-informed decision-making.
- Elevate the visibility and impact of OFSA's initiatives, grantees, and statewide food security efforts through conferences, publications, technical assistance, and strategic communications in partnership with the OFSA communications team.
- Support statewide and national engagement around food security policy, federal nutrition programs, and innovative community practices.

Eligibility Information

Eligible Applicants

Applicants must be physically located and operate in United States. Eligible applicants include:

- **Research Colleges and Universities:** United States-based research colleges and universities, both public and private institutions. Research centers and institutes housed on college and university campuses are also included.
- **Consulting firms:** Both for-profit and non-profit consulting firms based in the United States conducting quantitative and qualitative research and providing technical assistance, including those that have worked with other state and federal agencies and with a demonstrated familiarity with the New Jersey food security landscape
- **Individual consultants:** Both for-profit and non-profit individual consultants that are approved to do business in the United States and based in the United States conducting food security consulting work that is informed by the Six Dimensions of Food Security with a demonstrated familiarity with the New Jersey food security landscape.

Eligible applicants must demonstrate substantial research, methodological, and applied expertise related to food security measurement, multidimensional frameworks, and community-informed evaluation. Competitive applicants should possess the following qualifications and credentials:

1. Demonstrated research experience related to the six dimensions of food security including conceptualization, operationalization, measurement, and applied evaluation.
2. Demonstrated familiarity with New Jersey's food security landscape, county-level systems, demographics, and regional implementation contexts, including experience working with state agencies, county partners, and community organizations.
3. Documented history of conducting New Jersey-specific food security technical assistance and analysis, including use of and support of administrative, survey, qualitative, or mixed-methods data efforts.
4. Experience managing large-scale applied research initiatives and demonstrated experience in working with national partners.
5. Documented experience in managing national projects.
6. History of successful management of state, federal, philanthropic, and/or university-supported research contracts or partnerships related to food security, public health, and/or systems change.

Eligibility Restrictions

The following entities are ineligible to apply:

- Federal agencies, departments, offices, and bureaus
- State of New Jersey departments, offices, and agencies

Allowable Expenses

Budgets can include direct costs related to personnel (including fringe), contractors, equipment, software, meeting expenses, and travel costs specific to the operationalization of this research. This includes support of graduate students in academic settings. Direct costs are costs specific to the efforts outlined above and do not include costs associated with operating the applicant's business operations. All applicants will be limited to no more than 10 percent allowed indirect costs. Additional Information on allowable expenses is outlined below:

- Equipment (i.e., items of personal property having a useful life of more than one year and a cost of \$5,000 or more) that are purchased using research funds must be used during the grant period for the sole purpose of accomplishing the stated project objectives. The project must reflect appropriate equipment depreciation or request depreciation flexibility. If purchased equipment is not fully dedicated to the grant project, including extension beyond the grant period end date, the applicant must determine what percentage of the equipment's time or space will be dedicated to project activities when developing a budget.
- At any time, during or after the funding period, if OFSA determines any equipment purchased using these funds are no longer being used in alignment with the purposes of this program, or have been sold, OFSA may demand that the property or funds be returned. All property associated with this research are purchased using funds from OFSA and are therefore property of OFSA.
- Travel costs should be limited to mileage and paid at the prevailing IRS rate. Any travel costs beyond mileage must have a justification.
- Funds may only be expended during the research period of performance. Any unspent funds at grant period end must be returned to OFSA within fifteen (15) business days of grant end date.

Budgets may not include:

- Supplies (e.g., office supplies for general use, although these may be covered under the 10 percent allowable indirect costs)
- Travel expenses not related to project activities
- Reimbursement for pre-award costs
- Lobbying or advocacy

Financial Reporting

This funding will be administered by the New Jersey Office of the Food Security Advocate (OFSA) with support from the NJDA fiscal team. Vendor will be required to track monthly expenses and retain receipts and should be able to provide that documentation upon request. Vendor will be required to submit quarterly financial reports. Documentation should be retained for three years.

Application Submission Information

Applications Due: Friday, July 17, 2026, at 5pm ET

Initiative Term: Two years, to commence upon approval from OFSA, timeline may be subject to change.

All interested applicants should submit the required application information specified below including an [itemized budget](#), budget narrative (attached separately) and [Risk Assessment form](#) (attached separately). A curriculum vitae for each team member of the applicant should be included. All documents should be emailed to OFSA@ag.nj.gov by July 17 at 5pm ET. Use the email subject line, “NJ Food Security Research Support & Technical Assistance” when submitting the application. Incomplete or late applications will not be accepted. If you have any questions about this funding opportunity, please contact: New Jersey Office of the Food Security Advocate at ofsa@ag.nj.gov.

Application Content Requirements

A template is not being provided for this RFA. Submissions should include the following information:

Section 1. Applicant Information

- Applicant Organization Information and Description
- Primary Contact
- Budget Manager Contact

Section 2. Statement of Work/Project Plan Section 3.

Background of Team

- Names and role of each member of the team
- Curriculum vitae for each member of team

Section 4. Budget (download the [Budget Template](#) here)

- Itemized budget
- Budget narrative

Section 5. Risk Assessment Form (download the [Risk Assessment form](#) here)

- Organization funding and accounting information

Selection Process

- Following an initial screening process for confirmation of the applicant organization's eligibility, OFSA will review and determine the technical merits of each application.
- Each applicant will be assigned one primary reviewer and at least one other reviewer.
- Reviewers will independently score each application based on the criteria outlined in the Scoring Rubric section of this RFA.
- Reviewer scores will be averaged and discussed among the reviewing team. This process will generate a list of fundable, competitive applications for consideration.
- OFSA will require all reviewers to sign a conflict of interest and confidentiality form to prevent any actual or perceived conflicts of interest that may affect the application review and evaluation process.
- Names of applicants applying will be kept confidential, except to those involved in the review process, to the extent permitted by law. In addition, the identities of the reviewers will remain confidential throughout the entire process. Therefore, the names of the reviewers will not be released to applicants.
- Award notifications will be delivered to applicants via email up to four weeks after the RFA due date.

Scoring Rubric

Point Value (out of 100)	Application Template Heading and Scoring
10 Points	Section 1. Applicant Information
50 Points	Section 2. Scope of Work/Project Plan
20 Points	Section 3. Background of Team
10 Points	Section 4. Budget • 4.1 Itemized Budget - 5 Points • 4.2 Budget Narrative Justification – 5 Points
10 Points	Section 5. Risk Assessment