



New Jersey County Food Security Coalition Network Initiative

REQUEST FOR APPLICATIONS (RFA) DUE:

June 17, 2026 at 5 PM ET

Contents

Contents	2
Background & Purpose	3
Intended Outcomes	4
Program Overview	5
Available Funding	5
Eligible Projects	5
Eligibility Information	6
Allowable Expenses	7
Grantee Requirements	9
Project Monitoring and Reporting	9
Financial Reporting	9
Application Submission Information	10
Application Content Requirements	10
Selection Process	11
Scoring Rubric	11
Appendix A. New Jersey Food Security 3-Year Strategic Plan Focus Area 3	12

Background & Purpose

On February 17, 2026, the [New Jersey Office of the Food Security Advocate \(OFSA\)](#) released the [New Jersey Food Security Strategic Plan](#). This Strategic Plan, developed through cross-sector community engagement, identified building and supporting local partnerships to advance community-driven food security approaches as a key focus area (see Focus Area 3).

This focus area recognizes that no single organization, program, or sector can address the complex and interconnected drivers of food insecurity alone. Sustainable progress requires coordinated local leadership, community-informed planning, shared accountability, and cross-sector collaboration. County and regional food security coalitions play a critical role in advancing these efforts by convening partners, elevating community voice, identifying local priorities, coordinating implementation efforts, and strengthening pathways to systems change.

Across New Jersey, counties vary significantly in their level of coalition infrastructure, capacity, coordination, and access to technical support. While some counties have established collaborative food security networks, others are in earlier stages of coalition development or operate without dedicated coordination structures. Additionally, opportunities remain to strengthen statewide alignment, peer learning, evaluation, communication, and sustainability across local efforts.

In support of advancing Focus Area 3 of the New Jersey Food Security Strategic Plan, OFSA seeks to establish and implement the New Jersey County Food Security Coalition Network Initiative. This initiative will support the development, coordination, and evaluation of county-level food security coalitions and create a structured statewide coalition network to advance shared learning, accountability, and systems change.

The selected partner will support county coalition network development statewide, county coalition capacity building, technical assistance, program facilitation, toolkit development, evaluation, dissemination, and sustainability planning activities that strengthen New Jersey's coordinated food security infrastructure and position the state as a national leader in localized community-driven food security innovation.

Intended Outcomes

Intended outcomes of the New Jersey's Food Security Coalition Network Initiative include:

- Increased development, sustainability, and coordination of county-based food security coalitions across New Jersey;
- Increased cross-sector collaboration and alignment among local governments, nonprofits, healthcare systems, schools, philanthropy, community residents, and other stakeholders;
- Increased integration of community voice and lived expertise into food security planning and decision-making;
- Increased statewide coordination, communication, and shared learning among county coalitions;
- Increased implementation of localized food security action plans aligned with the New Jersey Food Security Strategic Plan;
- Increased use of equitable, community-driven, and systems-focused approaches to addressing food insecurity;
- Increased organizational capacity related to coalition facilitation, evaluation, data use, sustainability planning, and systems change implementation;
- Increased understanding of coalition effectiveness, implementation strategies, and systems-level outcomes through mixed-method evaluation activities; and
- Increased sustainability and scalability of county coalition infrastructure and statewide network coordination efforts.

Program Overview

Available Funding

There is \$460,000 per year available for this two-year project, for a total of \$920,000 over the course of two years. Funding will be awarded through a Request for Applications (RFA) process. There is no cost sharing or matching requirement for funds. The project period will begin July 1, 2026, with project periods extending up to 24 calendar months.

Eligible Projects

Projects must support the development, coordination, and evaluation of county-level food security coalitions and create a structured statewide coalition network to advance shared learning, accountability, and systems change. Projects must also address one or more of the intended outcomes listed above in the Intended Outcomes section of this RFA.

Projects must directly advance Focus Area 3 of the [New Jersey Food Security Strategic Plan](#): *Build and Support Local Partnerships to Advance Community-Driven Food Security Approaches*. Projects will implement one or more of the following strategies:

- **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.
- **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.
- **Bi-Directional Community Engagement:** Establish consistent bi-directional community engagement strategies 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.
- **Screening and Referrals:** Provide cross-sector data integration, resources, technical assistance, and training to organizations on screening for food security program eligibility/need and providing closed-loop referrals to services.

Explore [Appendix A for expanded descriptions of each of these strategies](#).

Eligibility Information

Eligible Applicants

Applicants must be physically located and operate in New Jersey. Eligible applicants include:

- **Research Colleges and Universities:** New Jersey-based research colleges and universities, both public and private institutions. Research centers and institutes housed on college and university campuses are also included.
- **Research Agencies:** Both for-profit and non-profit research agencies based in New Jersey conducting quantitative and qualitative research including those that have worked with other state and federal agencies.
- **Public Health Agencies:** Both for-profit and non-profit public health institutions based in New Jersey conducting quantitative and qualitative research including those that have worked with other state and federal agencies.

Eligible applicants must demonstrate the organizational capacity, subject matter expertise, and administrative infrastructure necessary to successfully implement and sustain a statewide county coalition initiative focused on food security and related social determinants of health. Competitive applicants should possess the following qualifications and credentials:

1. Demonstrated experience establishing, supporting, coordinating, and evaluating multisector coalition networks at the statewide or regional level, including engagement with government agencies, nonprofit organizations, community-based organizations, healthcare systems, philanthropy, academia, and individuals with lived experience.
2. Demonstrated expertise in coalition-building and collective impact as evidenced through peer-reviewed publications, gray literature reports, technical assistance materials, public-facing toolkits, conference presentations, webinars, and/or applied research focused on social issues such as food security, public health, poverty, or health equity.
3. Established administrative and fiscal infrastructure necessary to manage and distribute county-level stipends or subawards, including financial oversight systems, reporting procedures, compliance monitoring, and technical assistance capacity.
4. Documented history of successfully managing state, federal, philanthropic, contracts or cooperative agreements related to coalition coordination, systems change initiatives, or cross-sector implementation models.
5. Demonstrated capacity to provide statewide coordination, technical assistance, training, facilitation, and evaluation support across diverse New Jersey

geographic regions and stakeholder groups, including rural, suburban, and urban communities.

6. Experience designing and implementing participatory, community-informed, and equity-centered approaches that elevate community voice and support inclusive decision-making processes.
7. Demonstrated experience facilitating cross-sector action planning and network governance structures that support long-term sustainability and alignment across partners.
8. Staffing structure with dedicated personnel possessing expertise in coalition management, facilitation, research and evaluation, communications, and stakeholder engagement.
9. Strong familiarity with New Jersey's county coalition landscape, public systems, and county-level infrastructure and/or demonstrated experience implementing comparable statewide initiatives in other jurisdictions.
10. Demonstrated grounding in public health, social work, community development, or related practice frameworks that emphasize systems thinking, community engagement, interdisciplinary collaboration, equity, and ethical partnership-building in addressing complex social issues.

Eligibility Restrictions

The following entities are ineligible for funding:

- 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 project. This includes support of graduate students in academic settings. Direct costs are costs specific to the research itself and do not include costs associated with operating the agency/institution. 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 project 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 project, or have been sold, OFSA may demand that the property or funds be returned. All property associated with this project 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

Grantee Requirements

Project Monitoring and Reporting

Grantees will meet with OFSA quarterly to provide additional updates, express concerns and request technical assistance outside of scheduled reporting requirements. Grantees will submit a brief midpoint project report and one final project report at the conclusion of the funding period and submit any materials (e.g., educational, promotional, interview guides, data collection) developed as a part of this project with their final reports.

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. Grantee will be required to track monthly expenses and retain receipts and should be able to provide that documentation upon request. Grantee will be required to submit quarterly financial reports. Documentation should be retained for three years from the date of submission of the final financial report.

Application Submission Information

Applications Due: June 17, 2026 at 5pm ET

Question & Answer Period – June 3, 2026 – June 10, 2026

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 member of the research team should also be included.

All documents should be emailed to ofsa@ag.nj.gov by June 17 at 5pm ET. Use the email subject line, “County Coalition Network Application” 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 the RFA and submission 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. Research Team

- Names and role of each member of the research team
- Curriculum vitae for each member of team not including research/graduate assistants from applicants within the academic sector

Section 4. Budget

- Itemized budget
- Budget narrative

Section 5. Risk Assessment Form

- 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** below.
- 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 RFP 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. Research Team
10 Points	Section 4. Budget <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 4.1 Itemized Budget - 5 Points • 4.2 Budget Narrative Justification - 5 Points
10 Points	Section 5. Risk Assessment

Appendix A. New Jersey Food Security 3-Year Strategic Plan Focus Area 3

Focus Area 3: Build and Support Local Partnerships to Advance Community-Driven Food Security Approaches

FOCUS AREA 3 | STRATEGY 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

This strategy supports the design and delivery of locally tailored outreach efforts that reflect the needs and concerns of communities most impacted by food insecurity. Outreach efforts should be co-created with trusted messengers and embedded in familiar community settings, such as faith centers, civic organizations, childcare providers, healthcare providers, schools and local libraries, and may include online communication channels. Efforts should not only promote awareness of available programs but also address fears or misconceptions that may prevent engagement, such as concerns about eligibility, stigma, or data privacy.

FOCUS AREA 3 | STRATEGY 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.

This strategy promotes the growth and sustainability of county- and local-level food coalitions that facilitate collaboration among county governments, nonprofits, faith-based organizations, and residents. These entities serve as conveners of local knowledge and planning, helping communities identify gaps and duplications in services, define their food security tactics, drive implementation, monitor progress, and advocate for systemic change. This strategy includes support for participatory decision-making models that meaningfully incorporate resident voices, such as compensated advisory boards or community-led planning forums. This strategy can also include prioritization of grant funding and technical assistance for community organizations that may not have historically accessed public funding. This includes simplifying grant applications, offering technical support during the application process, providing general operating support, and prioritizing funding for organizations that historically have been excluded from traditional philanthropic or government grants.

FOCUS AREA 3 | STRATEGY 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.

To support effective and sustained food security efforts, this strategy includes the creation of routine engagement mechanisms and the strengthening of coordination between state and local food coalitions. Together, these efforts ensure that community voice is embedded in program and policy decision-making at all levels. This strategy promotes regular, structured opportunities for communities and coalitions to share bi-directional updates, provide feedback, identify challenges, and co-design solutions. Examples include statewide and local convenings, shared learning sessions, advisory councils, digital platforms for idea exchange, surveys, and focus groups. Strengthening feedback loops and shared priorities across levels of government and community coalitions reinforces strategic alignment, prevents duplication, and enables scaling local innovations statewide. Ultimately, this strategy positions residents, community-based organizations, and local coalitions as leaders in a coordinated system where state-level planning is informed by community knowledge, and where effective solutions can be replicated and celebrated statewide, furthering the state's position nationally as a recognized leader in promoting food security.

FOCUS AREA 3 | STRATEGY 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

This strategy invests in building organizations' capacity through tailored resources, training, and technical assistance on screening for food and nutrition program eligibility or need, providing information on available resources, and conducting referrals to existing services. This may include guidance on embedding screening into existing technological systems (such as electronic health records or case management platforms), establishing data sharing protocols that prioritize trust, privacy, and purpose-driven data use, and adopting bi-directional referral tools that allow organizations to communicate and coordinate more effectively. Technical assistance may cover data collection and evaluation practices, coalition-building, and applying for public funding to sustain these efforts. Training should be accessible, practical, culturally responsive, and available in multiple formats. By investing in organizational capacity and enabling more seamless communication across sectors, this strategy helps community partners more effectively connect people to resources, reduce administrative burden on both staff and households, and participate in coordinated food security efforts statewide.

For a full description of Focus Area 3, please see the [New Jersey Food Security Strategic Plan](#).