Office of the Food Security Advocate

Notice of Funding Availability (NOFA)

Food Security Systems Innovation – Public/Private Partnership Matching Grant

Fiscal Year: FY27

Administering Agency: New Jersey Office of the Food Security Advocate (OFSA)

Applications Due: December 7, 2026 via email attachment to OFSA@ag.nj.gov

I. Funding Opportunity Overview

The New Jersey Office of the Food Security Advocate (OFSA) announces the availability of $2,500,000 in state funding through a competitive Public/Private Partnership Matching Grant to support a Food Security Systems Innovation Grant Program. This funding opportunity is authorized under the FY27 State Budget appropriation for *Food Security Research & Innovation* and is intended to operationalize a public–philanthropic partnership that advances food security through efforts that improve, enhance, or build systems that strengthen food security in New Jersey through the 6-Dimensions of Food Security. For further information on the 6-Dimensions of Food Security, please refer to the OFSA Food Security Primer.

This NOFA is aligned with OFSA's statutory purpose under N.J.S.A. 52:27J-3 and with all Focus Areas of the New Jersey Statewide Food Security Strategic Plan. These focus areas are as follows:

- **Focus Area 1** (Enhance Information Exchange and Access to Improve Public Awareness, Optimize Programs, and Support Data-Driven Decision-Making);
- **Focus Area 2** (Expand Community-Based Food Infrastructure and Market Channel Creation for Enhanced Ongoing Food Access, Utilization, and Availability);
- **Focus Area 3** (Build and Support Local Partnerships to Advance Community-Driven Food Security Approaches);
- **Focus Area 4** (Improve Access to and Delivery of State and Federal Programs); and
- **Focus Area 5** (Strengthen Food Systems Resiliency).

This NOFA supports the establishment of a coordinated, pooled philanthropic partnership that will match or exceed the $2,500,000 state investment, resulting in a minimum of $5,000,000 in combined resources for systems change projects across New Jersey that are

aligned with the state's food security strategic plan and with the 6-Dimensions of Food Security.

II. Statutory Authority and Alignment

Funding is authorized pursuant to the FY27 New Jersey State Budget language, which provides 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. Expenditures for public-private partnerships and grant programs, in amounts determined by the Executive Director, shall be subject to the approval of the Director of the Division of Budget and Accounting."

III. Purpose of the Funding

The purpose of this funding is to establish a formal public–private partnership that will deploy coordinated, systems investments that create efforts focused on upstream food systems improvements and enhancements that are scalable, sustainable, and capable of producing long-term, systemic change.

Investments will address one or more of the following:

- Utilize community-centered approaches to gather quantitative and qualitative data on food insecurity in New Jersey. Apply these findings to strengthen coordination, advance collective impact, and support data-informed decision-making and strategies.
- Create and/or enhance markets for New Jersey-based food producers, strengthen resilient local food systems, and expand connections between locally based producers and New Jersey communities experiencing food insecurity.
- Build and support local partnerships through tailored education, outreach, and awareness efforts that advance collective impact and meaningful, bidirectional community engagement. Invest in collaborative, community-driven approaches that strengthen local capacity, improve coordination across sectors, and create scalable and sustainable systems to address food insecurity.
- Invest in efforts that improve access to, awareness of, and utilization of federal and state nutrition assistance programs, such as SNAP, WIC, School Meals, CACFP, FMNP, and Medicaid. Support strategies that reduce barriers to program

participation, strengthen outreach and enrollment assistance, improve coordination across program administrators and community-based organizations, and maximize the reach and impact of existing public resources.

- Invest in improvements to New Jersey's food systems infrastructure and resiliency, including agricultural innovation, local food production and distribution capacity, and strategies that strengthen the state's ability to respond to disruptions and sustain food access over time.

IV. Funding Amount and Term

- **Total State Funding Available:** $2,500,000
- **Required Match:** Dollar-for-dollar match or exceedance from philanthropic sources (minimum $2,500,000)
- **Total Anticipated Pilot Resources:** At least $5,000,000
- **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 New Jersey-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 elicit, secure, administer, and document a philanthropic match that meets or exceeds the state investment.
- 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 and matched philanthropic funds may be used to support activities outlined in the Section III, Purpose of Funding section of this NOFA.

Funds may not be used for activities inconsistent with the FY27 budget language, Section III Purpose of Funding of this NOFA, or outside OFSA's statutory purpose.

VII. Roles and Responsibilities

OFSA Responsibilities

- Provide strategic direction and oversight for the pilot(s);
- 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

- Secure and document the required philanthropic match;
- Administer pilot funds in accordance with the MOA and OFSA guidance;
- Implement transparent grantmaking or investment processes;
- Track expenditures, outputs, and outcomes; and
- Participate in evaluation and learning activities as required by OFSA.

VIII. Evaluation and Reporting Requirements

The selected partner will be required to:

- Submit regular fiscal and programmatic reports to OFSA;
- Track outputs and outcomes related to food distribution efficiency, producer participation, and community reach;
- Participate in OFSA-led evaluation activities designed to assess impact, equity, and scalability; and
- Contribute to a final summary report documenting lessons learned and recommendations for future expansion.

IX. Application Requirements

Applications must include, at minimum:

1. Organizational overview and relevant experience
2. Description of the proposed public–private partnership model
3. Plan for securing and managing the philanthropic match
4. Proposed approach to systems innovation investments

5. Fiscal management and reporting capacity
6. Evaluation and learning approach
7. Timeline through June 30, 2027

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 secure and administer the required match;
- Demonstrated fiscal and programmatic accountability;
- Commitment to equity, transparency, and learning; and
- Readiness to deploy funds within the FY26 timeframe.

XI. Anticipated Timeline

- **NOFA Announcement**: November 20, 2026
- **Questions Accepted**: Through November 30, 2026
- **Q&As Posted to OFSA Funding Opportunities Webpage**: December 1, 2026
    - For questions about this funding opportunity, please contact OFSA at ofsa@ag.nj.gov. In accordance with state policies, all questions received by November 30, 2026 will be answered by December 1, 2026 and available to all interested applicants via a link on OFSA's Funding Opportunities page.
- **Applications Due:** December 7, 2026 via email attachment to OFSA@ag.nj.gov
- **Anticipated Award Notification:** December 2026

XII. Contact Information

Please submit any questions and application responses to:

Office of the Food Security Advocate
OFSA@ag.nj.gov