



NJ Commitments for Food Security

Frequently Asked Questions

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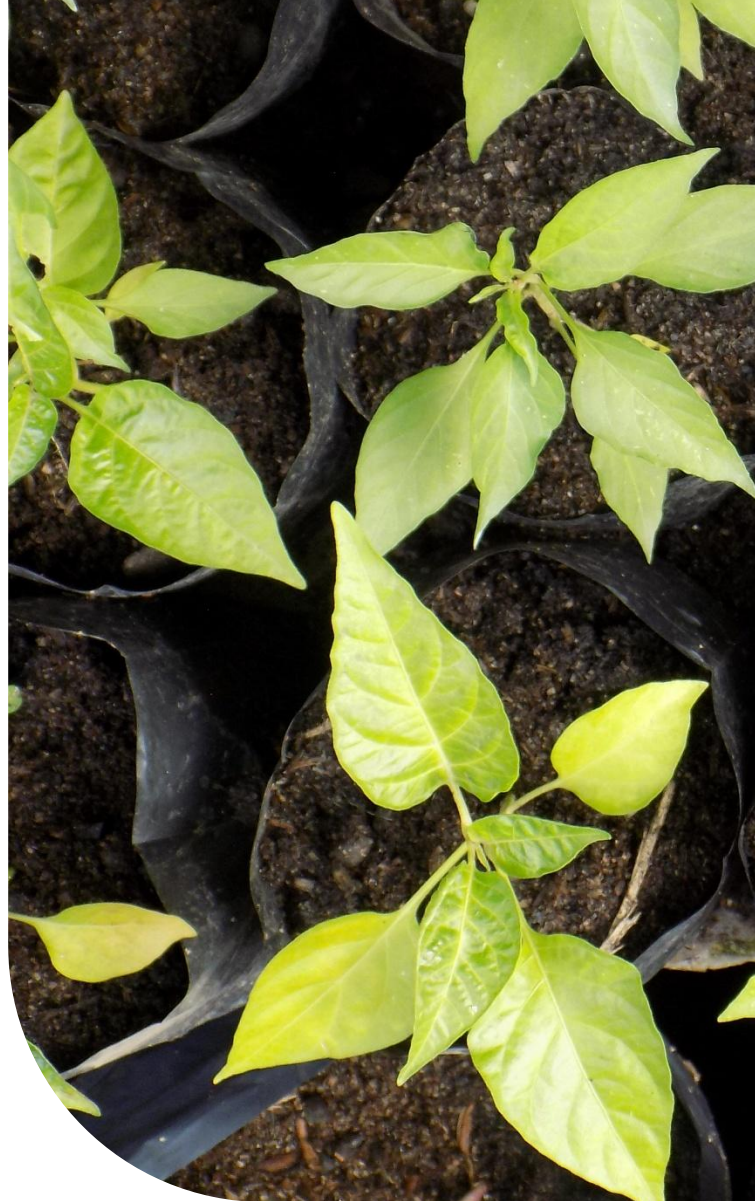
What is the purpose of the NJ Commitments for Food Security?

The [New Jersey Office of the Food Security Advocate \(OFSA\)](#) is inviting entities across New Jersey to submit NJ Commitments for Food Security (Commitments) for their programs that support the New Jersey Food Security Strategic Plan (Strategic Plan).

Commitments help connect individual programs to a broader statewide vision for coordinated action, shared learning, and collective impact. The Commitments build off of the final action-planning step outlined in the [Strategic Plan Implementation Planning Toolkit \(the Toolkit\)](#) and are intended to support implementation across sectors, regions, and focus areas.

The primary intentions of Commitments include:

- **To document and understand Strategic Plan uptake and impact** by documenting how organizations are implementing the priorities outlined in the Strategic Plan
- **To strengthen alignment, communication, and visibility** across sectors impacting food security by highlighting efforts toward shared food security goals



What Is a Commitment?

A Commitment is a specific program that supports one or more focus area or strategy within the Strategic Plan.

Commitments may include:

- Existing programs already underway
- New or emerging programs
- Collaborative efforts across organizations or sectors
- Programs funded through public, private, philanthropic, or community resources

OFSA will announce a call for Commitments annually. For this year's commitment submission, programs must be, or have been, active within calendar year 2026 (between January 1, 2026 - December 31, 2026).

Why submit a Commitment?

Submitting a Commitment helps:

- Demonstrate your organization's contribution to food security efforts in New Jersey
- Connect your work to a broader statewide movement that is earning [national attention](#)
- Increase visibility for your program
- Support coordination across sectors and regions
- Highlight implementation successes and innovative approaches
- Inform statewide understanding of how the Strategic Plan is being implemented
- Build momentum toward a more equitable and food-secure New Jersey

Additional benefits include:

- Promotional materials from OFSA
- Program spotlight opportunities, including at OFSA's *Annual Garden State Conference on Food Security: Setting a Table for All, for Always*
- Optional participation in shared learning sessions and collaboratives

What counts as a “program”?

For the purposes of the Commitments process, a “program” is a coordinated set of related activities or services designed to advance food security.

A program may be:

- Large or small
- New or long-standing
- Local, countywide, regional, or statewide
- Focused on one strategy or multiple strategies

A program is generally:

- Ongoing or coordinated over time
- Designed with clear goals or intended outcomes
- More than a single one-time event or activity

For example:

- A coordinated food recovery initiative with multiple partners would qualify as a program
- A one-time food distribution event by itself would generally not qualify as a standalone program Commitment

At the same time, an entire department or an organization's complete portfolio of work should not be submitted as one Commitment. Organizations should instead identify distinct programs or initiatives within their broader body of work. For additional information on our definition of a program for the purpose of the Commitments, see [the Toolkit](#).

Who should submit a commitment?

OFSA welcomes Commitments from any organization, coalition, institution, business, or agency working to advance food security in New Jersey.

Food security is a shared responsibility that requires collaboration across sectors. All sectors and groups can play a role in supporting the Strategic Plan's focus areas and strategies.

Organizations encouraged to participate include:

- Academic and research organizations
- Schools, school districts, and childcare centers
- Local, county, and regional coalitions
- Community and advocacy organizations
- Charitable food networks and food access organizations
- Agriculture and economic development agencies
- Philanthropic partners and funders
- Food producers, including farmers, ranchers, fishers, and other producers
- Food retail and food supply chain organizations
- Healthcare systems and health-focused organizations
- State, county, tribal, and local agencies
- Community-based organizations and resident-led initiatives
- Industry and private-sector partners

What if I have multiple programs?

Organizations with multiple qualifying programs should submit a separate Commitment for each program.

Submitting Commitments separately helps OFSA:

- Better understand the scope of implementation efforts
- Identify alignment across strategies and focus areas
- Highlight diverse approaches and partnerships
- Aggregate implementation data more accurately

For example:

- A healthcare system operating both a medically tailored meals program and a produce prescription program can submit two separate Commitments.
- A school district with distinct summer meals and school pantry programs can submit separate Commitments for each effort.

OFSA will provide a summary document for organizations with multiple Commitments so they can communicate about their work as a whole package. If you are unsure if your work falls into multiple programs please reach out to OFSA for clarification and support.



How do I submit a Commitment?

[Program Commitments can be submitted through this online form](#). The form is designed to collect information about:

- The program being submitted
- Your organization and partners
- Geographic reach and populations served
- Alignment with Strategic Plan focus areas and strategies
- Program goals, activities, and intended outcomes

By submitting a Commitment, organizations agree to allow OFSA to publicly promote approved information describing the program. OFSA understands that programs are at different stages of development and implementation. Organizations do not need to have a “perfect” or fully mature program to participate.

What is the 2026 Commitments timeline?

Activity	Timeline
Call for Commitments Form Opens	June 10, 2026
Commitment Submissions Due	August 7, 2026
Review and Acceptance of Commitments	August–September 2026
Organizations Notified of Accepted Commitment	September 2026
Public Announcement of Commitments at the <i>OFSA Garden State Conference on Food Security</i>	October 2026

What if I missed the submission due date?

The due date for Commitment submissions is extended to August 7, 2026. OFSA encourages organizations that miss this extended submission due date to contact Dr. Jenny Schrum (Jennifer.Schrum@ag.nj.gov) at OFSA. While commitments submitted after the due date may still be accepted and included in statewide implementation tracking and learning activities, OFSA cannot guarantee that late submissions will be finalized in time for the public announcement and recognition activities at the *OFSA Garden State Conference on Food Security*.

If you anticipate needing additional time, please reach out to OFSA as early as possible.

Will there be future calls for Commitments?

Yes. OFSA intends to release a new Call for Commitments each year as part of the ongoing implementation of the New Jersey Food Security Strategic Plan.

Future commitment cycles are anticipated as follows:

- Early 2027 Call for Commitments: Programs active during calendar year 2027
- Early 2028 Call for Commitments: Programs active during calendar year 2028

Each annual cycle will provide opportunities for organizations to:

- Submit new programs
- Renew ("re-up") continuing programs
- Update information about evolving programs
- Report on ("close-out") completed programs

This annual process will help OFSA track implementation over time and recognize ongoing contributions towards the 3-year Strategic Plan.

I have a program that operates in multiple years. When should I submit my Commitment?

OFSA encourages you to submit program Commitments in 2026 for all programs active in 2026, even if they began or will end in a different calendar year.

For example:

- If your program begins in 2026 and continues through 2028, submit it in this 2026 Call for Commitments. You will have the opportunity to renew or close-out the program in future annual Calls for Commitments.
- If your program began before 2026 but will continue operating during or after 2026, it should be submitted as part of the 2026 Commitment cohort.
- If your program ended before 2026, it does not qualify as a Commitment submission.



What happens after I submit my Commitment?

After submission, OFSA will:

1. Review your Commitment submission
2. Reach out if clarification or revisions are needed
3. Work collaboratively with submitting organizations to finalize Commitments
4. Aggregate information across Commitments to better understand implementation activity across the state
5. Identify opportunities to highlight and elevate promising practices

Organizations will receive notice regarding acceptance of their Commitment following the review process. Accepted Commitments will remain non-public information until OFSA's Annual, where Commitments will be publicly announced and celebrated as part of a statewide recognition effort.

Accepted organizations may also receive:

- Promotional and communications materials
- Summary of their Commitment(s) and how it supports the Strategic Plan
- Invitations to share implementation stories, lessons learned, and promising practices

What are the reporting and participation expectations?

To support statewide learning and implementation tracking, participating organizations may be asked to:

- Complete a brief annual progress survey
- Participate in optional interviews, focus groups, case studies, or other implementation learning activities as feasible

OFSA is committed to keeping expectations streamlined and feasible for participating organizations.

How can I get technical assistance or support?

Please contact Dr. Jenny Schrum (Jennifer.Schrum@ag.nj.gov) at OFSA for support and technical assistance related to the Commitments process.

Support may include:

- Clarifying whether a program is a good fit for the Commitments.
- Assistance interpreting Strategic Plan focus areas or strategies.
- General support completing the Commitments form.

My organization has many programs. How do I submit them all?

- Organizations should submit a separate Commitment for each distinct program that aligns with the [New Jersey Food Security Strategic Plan](#). However, before submitting, we encourage you to thoughtfully consider how your work is organized and whether some activities are part of a larger program.
- To confirm if a program should be submitted as a Commitment, ask:
 - Does this program align with one or more strategies in the Strategic Plan?
 - Is this a coordinated program with its own goals, intended outcomes, and target population, or is it an activity within a larger program?
 - Would combining related activities or programs into a broader program provide a clearer picture of the program's overall impact?
 - Below are examples of how an organization may condense multiple activities into a single program for a Commitment.
- Not every program your organization operates will necessarily align with the Strategic Plan which is okay. The Commitments process is intended to understand programs that directly contribute to advancing the Plan's focus areas and strategies.
- **For organizations with many programs, OFSA encourages submitting three to five Commitments that best represent your food security work.** Future, annual Calls for Commitments will provide opportunities to submit additional programs, update existing commitments, and recognize new initiatives.
- If you're unsure how to define your programs, we encourage you to review the ["What is a Program?" section of the Strategic Plan Implementation Planning Toolkit](#) or contact OFSA for technical assistance.
- **Examples of Programs with Multiple Activities**
 - Community Garden Initiative
 - Activities could include gardening workshops, volunteer days, nutrition education, and produce distribution via a CSA model.
 - Rather than submitting each activity separately, submit one Commitment describing the overall Community Garden Initiative.
 - Mobile Market Program
 - Activities could include food recovery, produce purchasing, nutrition education, and weekly market stops.
 - These activities work together to support one coordinated program and should generally be submitted as a single Commitment.
 - Nutrition Education Program
 - If your organization operates an ongoing nutrition education program with dedicated staff, curriculum, and outcomes, that may be a standalone program.
 - However, if nutrition education consists of occasional workshops offered as part of another initiative (such as a food pantry or community garden), those workshops would typically be described as activities within the larger program rather than submitted separately.

Our organization is part of a coalition, network, or collaborative. Who should submit the Commitment?

- The organization or entity responsible for implementing the program should submit the Commitment.
- If multiple organizations independently operate similar programs, each organization should submit a Commitment for the program it manages.
 - For example: Three organizations each operate their own mobile market and are members of the same county coalition sharing best practices and have some shared resources. Each organization should submit its own Commitment because each operates a separate market program.
- If a coalition, network, or partnership jointly plans, manages, and delivers a single shared program, then the coalition (or another mutually agreed-upon lead organization) should submit one Commitment on behalf of that collaborative effort.
 - For example: A regional coalition jointly operates one mobile market with shared funding, staffing, branding, and operations. The coalition or designated lead organization should submit a single Commitment describing the shared program.
- If you're uncertain which approach is most appropriate, OFSA is happy to provide guidance before you submit.