



UNITED WAY OF NEW YORK CITY

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[unitedwaynyc.org](http://unitedwaynyc.org)

## 2026 United Way of New York City Seed Grant Application Guidelines

For the 2026 Seed Grant cycle, we invite non-profit organizations to apply for funding for new projects focused on developing or improving nutrition education programs or urban farming initiatives that incorporate nutrition or culinary education for low-income individuals. Seed Grant projects that demonstrate ability to be replicable, sustainable AND focus on addressing ongoing, persistent need(s) within the emergency food network will be prioritized. Awarded projects may receive up to \$30,000.

### NOTE:

**Seed Grant funding cannot be used for food purchases, operating, expansion, or start-up costs for food pantries, soup kitchens, or other Emergency Feeding Programs (EFPs). Applications requesting funds for food, food distribution, or the operation/startup of EFPs will be automatically disqualified.**

Projects should meet one or more of the following criteria:

- Increase or enhance access to nutrition education in communities experiencing high food insecurity.
- Increase organizational capacity and effectiveness to provide nutrition education or support urban farming/growing initiatives that improve access to healthy foods.

Examples of eligible projects include, but are not limited to:

- Creating or expanding nutrition education programming for food pantry guests, families, and community members, such as cooking demonstrations, workshops on reading food labels, or culturally relevant healthy-eating classes supporting self-sufficiency.
- Developing partnerships that strengthen or expand nutrition-focused programs, such as collaborations with schools, health educators, community groups, farms, or culinary organizations to support consistent, evidence-based education
- Starting or expanding an urban farm or community gardening program that distributes produce free of charge while also teaching community members gardening, cooking with seasonal vegetables, and basic nutrition skills.

### Seed Grant Eligibility

- Applicant is an established community-based organization in New York City that works with a food-insecure population.
- Nonprofit with valid 501(c)(3) status with adequate facilities and resources to sustain the proposed project after the one-year grant. If using a Fiscal Conduit, the following documents are required:
  - verification of the applying agency's EIN number
  - a letter from the fiscal conduit outlining the relevant dates that their 501c3 status will cover the applying agency
  - the 501c3 tax-exempt status letter from the organization acting as Fiscal Conduit
- Organizations holding direct HPNAP contracts are eligible to apply for Seed Grants if the funding requested is supporting a **NEW** project not already receiving HPNAP funds.
- Seed Grants are **ONE TIME, NON-RENEWABLE** awards. Organizations previously awarded a Seed Grant may apply only once within a five-year period.

- **\*Special Eligibility Requirements for urban farming projects\*:**
  - Applicants must own or lease the proposed land/rooftop space or provide documentation to support its right to use the space indefinitely.
  - Applicants must state the size (in square feet) of the dedicated land or rooftop space for the proposed project.

## Seed Grant Selection Criteria

Applicants must clearly state how the proposed project will address the needs of the target population, fits within the applicant's general scope of community services, and how the project will be sustained/maintained/continued after the grant period. Applications meeting the eligibility criteria will be evaluated on the following:

- Clarity, strength, feasibility, and replicability of the project design
- Relationship of deliverables and budget to project description and goals
- Alignment of project with the organization's mission and community need
- Ability to demonstrate continuation of project after Seed Grant period
- This is a one-year start-up grant, and funding is intended for costs that contribute directly to program outcomes and position the organization to sustain the project after the grant year ends.

## Seed Grant Implementation Timeframe

Applicants may set their own project implementation timeline starting from April 1, 2026, through March 31, 2027. Project objectives, outcomes, budgets, reporting schedules, and site visit timelines will be agreed upon before funds are distributed.

- 50% of the grant award will be distributed after the contract execution in April 2026.
- The next installment of 25% of grant funds will be paid upon successful submission of an Interim Report in September 2026, contingent on completion of outcomes.
- A final installment of 25% of grant funds will be paid upon submission of the Final Report in April 2027, contingent upon completion of outcomes. **100% of awards grant funds must be spent by March 31, 2027. Any remaining unspent funds must be returned.**

## **Application Instructions: All materials MUST be submitted online by January 22, 2026**

### **Step One:**

Before starting the application carefully review this Guide, including the **Application Questions** and required documents to understand what information is needed. Please note, the online application must be completed in one sitting; you will not be able to save and resume later. To prepare, we suggest drafting your responses offline and ensuring you have all the required documentation listed in the Seed Grant Guidelines before beginning your submission.

### **Step Two:**

Download the following **application documents** from [FeedNYC.org](https://FeedNYC.org):

- 1) "Goals, Activities, Deliverables & Outcomes"
- 2) "Budget Proposal"

### **Step Three:**

Go to the [online application portal](#), complete all required questions (use your prepared answers to save time). Upload all the required files listed below.

#### ***Required Documents:***

1. Completed "Goals, Activities, Deliverables & Outcomes" document (**PDF**)
2. Completed "Budget Proposal" (**Excel format**)
3. Copy of Federal Exempt Status Certificate 501(c)(3) (**PDF required**)
4. Current Organization Staffing Chart -- highlight staff involved in Seed Grant (**PDF preferred**)
5. Resumes and job descriptions of staff involved in Seed Grant -- combine into one document (**PDF preferred**)
6. Current Organizational Budget (**PDF preferred**)

#### ***Optional Documents:***

- Audit, if available (**PDF required**)
- Upload up to three additional supporting documents, such as letters of support, or an agreement regarding land use, partnerships, consultancy services etc. (**PDF required**)

## Application Questions (Go to Application Portal to enter Answers)

The following are all the questions that will appear on the online application portal in Cognito Forms. You might find it helpful to prepare your responses to questions below separately before submitting online.

### **Part 1: Basic Information**

Upon accessing the online application portal, please provide contact information for the primary grant contact person. This contact person should be the staff member responsible for managing the seed grant project throughout the full grant period. Be sure to also include the Executive Director's (ED) contact information and basic information about your organization.

1. What is your organization's type?
2. Please provide the name of your organization.
3. When was your organization started? (DD/MM/YYYY)
4. Please provide your fiscal agent if any (enter N/A if not applicable).
5. Please provide your mailing address (Address/City/State/Zip Code).
6. Please provide information about your Executive Director (Name/Telephone/Email).
7. Please provide your contact person's information (Name/Email/Phone).

### **Part 2: Tell Us About Your Organization**

8. **What is your organization's mission? (300-word count limit)**  
 To help you in stating your organization's mission, answer the following questions: Who are you? What do you do? Whom do you serve? Why do you exist? Be sure to include the scope of program services.
9. **What services do you provide to your clients?**  
 This check box will allow you to select services such as Public Benefits referrals, Job Placement, Case Management, etc.
10. **What is the target population of your organization's work?**  
 How do they learn about your organization? You may upload samples of flyers, brochures, or outreach materials.
11. **How does this target population learn about your organization?**  
 This check box will allow you to select the way your organizations promote its services to the public.
12. **Please attach any outreach materials such as samples of fliers & brochures.**  
 There will be an upload option to include promotional materials for your organization.

### **Part 3: Seed Grant Project Description**

13. **Provide a summary statement of the project for which you are requesting funds and indicate what you aim to accomplish.** In the summary statement, provide grant reviewers with a brief snapshot of the project and what you hope to accomplish. Provide basic information about the proposed project: category, project summary, what you plan to accomplish and total dollar amount requested. **Note:** Urban farming projects must include the size of the proposed urban farm and description of who owns the land.  
**Example:** *ABC Organization will start a farm in the backyard behind our headquarters. We will recruit XX community members from the food pantry and our other programs to join our Gardening Team. Staff member Lisa Jones will be responsible for the Gardening Team and all aspects of this project. We will use grant money to hire XYZ Urban Farming Consultant to provide training to the Gardening Team and guide us*

*through the process of starting a farm. Vegetables from the farm will be distributed in the food pantry and to the Gardening Team.*

**14. Statement of Need:**

Who will benefit from this project? Describe how the project will address the needs of the community and how the community will benefit. Describe your target population and/or the geographic area for this project, as well as the reason you chose this population and/or geographic area.

**15. Goals:**

Describe the goal(s) for this project and how you will measure success and effects on the target population.

**16. Project Plan:**

Describe your plan for this project. How will you get started? Will you enlist the services of experts or organizations to provide fee-based consultancy services, such as training and step-by step technical assistance? How will you engage community members or recruit participants? Who will be involved/trained to perform the day-to-day activities? How will you recruit them? For urban farming projects, describe your plan for distributing/using the farm grown produce.

**17. Alignment with Organizational Mission & Services:**

This grant is intended to enhance your organization's ability to provide additional services to your target population and community. Describe how this project is aligned with your mission and program services. How will it be integrated into existing programming and services? *This section is important because it helps the grant review committee understand how your Seed Grant project would align with your organization's mission, enhance its services, and how the project benefits the target population.*

**18. Project Sustainability:**

How will you continue this project when HPNAP funds are no longer available? Note: This question has a big impact on your Seed Grant application's score. Please describe in detail your plan for securing future, on-going funding.

This one-time Seed Grant is meant to help community groups acquire the resources and skills they need to start or enhance an existing project. Explain how you'll keep the project going after the grant ends. Don't forget to mention how staff, volunteers, community members, and other sources of funding will be involved and play a role in long-term project upkeep. Projects that employ a "train-the-trainer" approach can contribute to sustainability.

**19. Project Goals, Activities and Deliverables & Outcome Measures**

The project aims to address problems within the target community and population identified in Part 2B. Use this guide to complete the chart.

**Project Goal(s):** This should reflect what you intend to accomplish by receiving this Seed Grant. Each goal should be listed on the table in a separate row. Goals should be simple, measurable, and meaningful to your project.

**Planned Activities and Deliverables:** The project Deliverables are the steps or activities your project will take to accomplish your goal or goals. Each goal can have more than one deliverable. Deliverables must be specific and measurable! Keep all deliverables for the same goal in the same box. You may use additional sheets if necessary.

**Outcomes:** The project outcomes are the intended effect the activities and deliverables have on the target population.

**Staff Person Responsible and Timeline:** In this column, indicate the name of the person(s) responsible for each deliverable, and the timeline showing how long it will take to finish it. Please write down this timeline for each task in terms of MONTHS. Make sure these timelines are reasonable and suitable for finishing the deliverables.

Please note that only those individuals who will actually be completing deliverables of the project should be included in the budget. Seed Grants won't pay for staff who aren't directly involved, or for 'support staff' like maintenance workers, accountants, or Executive Directors. If consultants are the only person(s) completing project deliverables, you may not request any money in the 'Personnel' section of the budget.

## Example

Project Goal(s)	Planned Activities and Deliverables	Outcomes	Staff Person Responsible and Timeline
Connect Food Pantry clients with local farmers markets to educate them about local agriculture and nutrition benefit programs.	Pair Farmer's Market Educator with 2 pantries to oversee the delivery of education sessions. Provide weekly market tours to 400 pantry clients. Market tours to take place between July and October.	<p><b>Short Term:</b> Track each attendee through a sign in sheet. Conduct surveys for attendees to measure information retention from market tours.</p> <p><b>Long Term:</b> Track returning clients. Gather client feedback to help measure effectiveness and develop future sessions.</p>	May to July – Farmer's Market Education Manager: hire market educators. Identify participating pantries. July to October – Farmer's Market Educator: Implement education sessions – Pantry Coordinator: Conduct market tours

### Part 5: Proposed Budget

**20. Download the Proposed Budget Excel spreadsheet from [feednyc.org](https://feednyc.org) and follow the instructions on each worksheet. A complete Budget Proposal spreadsheet must be uploaded to the online application.**

Expenses for each item must be directly related to the project. For each category, you need to provide a list of itemized expenses and explain why these costs are necessary in the corresponding worksheet. Be thorough so we can understand your proposed project costs, but do not list unnecessary details. For example, if you include Materials and Supplies, please provide information about the categories of supplies to be purchased but do not list individual items with store names.

If awarded the Seed Grant, you will be required to provide proof of purchases for all items bought as well as proof of payment in interim and final reporting. Expenses such as fuel, car rental, and mileage records are also eligible for coverage, but you must provide documentation for these costs.

- Time sheets and/or payroll copies will be required for personnel expenses.
- External Consultant hires must be justified. Consultants can be individuals or organizations with proven skills and expertise in your project field/deliverables. The consultant budget cannot be used to offset existing staff costs. A signed statement of work is required to use this category.

### Budget Categories & Justification

A. **PERSONNEL SERVICES (SALARY & STIPENDS).** May not exceed one-third of the total grant budget. This

includes expenditures for existing Agency Staff and temporary (non-staff) assisting on project launch and execution. Salaries for Executive Directors will NOT be funded.

- a. For each salaried position described in the budget, describe the project duties of the staff person
  - i. Salaried Staff funded in the grant must be responsible for carrying out outcomes listed in Part 3 and only for direct involvement in the outcomes.
- b. For non- Full-Time Staff (i.e., stipend/non-salaried personnel/temps), specify who will receive stipends, the amount, and the duties these people will carry out.
  - i. Temporary (Non-staff) personnel expenditures are designed to support the recruitment of youth interns or community members of the target population as opposed to the employment of new agency staff.
  - ii. They may be paid a fixed stipend for services or hourly rate. Hourly remuneration for Stipend/Non-staff must meet the New York City minimum wage.

**B. MATERIALS AND SUPPLIES:**

- a. List each item, cost per item, number to be purchased, and total cost. Briefly describe the reason each item is needed for the project.

**C. TRAVEL/TRANSPORTATION:**

- a. Detail the proposed expenditure and purpose for travel. The maximum mileage reimbursement rate is determined by [IRS Standard Mileage Rates](#).

**D. PRINTING/COPYING & POSTAGE:**

- a. Describe what materials will be printed or mailed and estimate cost.

**E. EXTERNAL CONSULTANT(S):**

- a. If this category is used, provide a description of consultant duties and qualifications, rate of pay, and total hours necessary to complete duties. A consultant bio, resume, and/or scope of work is ideal.
- b. Describe why a consultant is necessary to perform these duties.
- c. **NOTE: A consultant quote/scope of work will be required prior to award.**

**F. OTHER:**

- a. Describe the expense and explain why it is needed for the project. Items over \$200 in the 'Other' category must be pre-approved prior to award distribution.

**Part 6. Uploading Required Documents (questions #21- #26 on application)**

Review the required documents section of this guide to ensure you are uploading the **six required documents** into the online application portal. Failure to submit required documents will result in delayed review or disqualification of your application.

By signing your name electronically here, you attest that you are authorized to submit this application on behalf of your organization and all information provided is true and accurate to the best of your knowledge.

***We are here to help!***

We recommend viewing the Seed Grant Application Workshop recording on [feednyc.org](https://feednyc.org). Further questions may be directed to [hpnay@uwnyc.org](mailto:hpnay@uwnyc.org). Please include your contact number in the message so we can get in touch with you. Good luck!