

Portland Public Schools Food Fund

Request for Proposals

Mission of Portland Public Schools Food Fund

Hosted by the Foundation for Portland Public Schools and made possible with donations from the community, the fund builds food security for Portland Public Schools (PPS) students with investments determined by school food systems partners including Cumberland County Food Security Council, FoodCorps Maine, Locker Project, Cumberland County Public Health Department, Cultivating Community, PPS Food Service Department, and the PPS Multilingual and Multicultural Center. It is intended to support comprehensive food access for families most vulnerable to food insecurity within the school system.

Our mission is to build food security in schools through comprehensive research and community-based action. We believe that food fuels learning and all students have the right to nutritious food that allows them to attain their full potential.

Project Criteria

- Geographic Area: within the Portland Public School District
- Age Range: families with children or PPS students
- Reach: more than a single family unit
- Must be related to immediate and/or long-term food security

Project Priorities

- Emphasis on local food and demonstration of awareness of community food preferences and barriers to access
- Support populations that face barriers to accessing other resources
- Leverage funding as effectively as possible
 - For example: a project that facilitates access to discounted or free food will receive priority over projects purchasing food at retail or gift cards to large supermarkets
- Supported by a collaborative team
 - For example: applications that involve multiple people/groups will receive priority over applications submitted by an individual
- Longer term projects addressing root causes of food insecurity

Examples of potential projects:

- Development and maintenance of gardens and greenhouses at schools
- Nutrition education curricula and supplies
- Support for celebrations of local food in the schools, including engaging students in growing and preparing some of their food

Non-Eligible Projects

- The Food Fund will **not** be accepting requests for snacks during this cycle

Eligibility Criteria

All applicants must illustrate that the proposed project:

- Bolsters the food security of PPS students
- Advances at least one, but preferably more, recommendation(s) from the [‘Food Fuels Learning: A Portland Public Schools Food Security Needs Assessment’](#). A complete list of recommendations is listed at the bottom of this Request for Proposal (RFP).
- Has adequate school community support for implementation (e.g., parents, staff, teachers have the capacity to perform proposed project)

Grant Range

\$500-\$1500

Method of Submission

The Request for Proposals and [application](#) are available on the [Food Fuels Learning website](#) and the [FPPS website](#).

Process

The grant review team will include past Food Fuels Learning leadership and current food systems partners. When reviewing applications, the grant review team will connect applicants who do not receive funding with other relevant resources.

Grant reviewers agree that they will 1) read all proposals in full, 2) judge proposals consistent with the RFP, and 3) attend a virtual selection meeting during the Proposal Review phase.

The grant review team will prioritize funding grants at schools that serve students experiencing high need (i.e., students at higher risk for food insecurity including but not limited to BIPOC students, students who speak a language other than English at home, and LGBTQ+ students).

Funding & Implementation Timeframe

Grants will be awarded for the 2026-2027 school year. Grant funds need to be used in full before the end of the school year. If grantees elect not to use the entire amount in the cycle, it will return to the Food Fund.

Grant Timeline

Applications Open	August 24, 2026
Application Due Date	September 30, 2026
Grantees Announced	October 26, 2026
Grants Distributed	no later than 1st week of November 2026
Grant Reporting Due	June 18, 2027

Food Fuels Learning: Portland Public Schools Food Security Needs Assessment Recommendations

- **Charitable Foods Recommendation 1** - Enhance consistent resource-sharing within, and among, school communities
- **Charitable Foods Recommendation 2** - Improve the reliability, efficiency, and sustainability of charitable food programs
- **Charitable Foods Recommendation 3** - Encourage low-barrier access and high availability of school pantries and food options
- **Federal Nutrition Programs Recommendation 1** - Increase overall student participation in federal nutrition programs
- **Federal Nutrition Programs Recommendation 3** - Cultivate a school culture of healthy and inclusive food practices
- **School Gardens Recommendation 1** - Develop and implement school garden-based learning goals integrated with Common Core State Standards
- **School Gardens Recommendation 2** - Create a district-wide School Garden Network
- **School Gardens Recommendation 3** - Increase funding and infrastructure for school garden programs
- **Nutrition Education Recommendation 1** - Develop a district-wide comprehensive and equitable approach to nutrition education
- **Nutrition Education Recommendation 2** - Designate one person to oversee nutrition education in the district
- **Nutrition Education Recommendation 3** - Prioritize and implement nutrition education in schools
- **Sustainable Practices Recommendation 1** - Develop measurable local food procurement goals for Food Services
- **Sustainable Practices Recommendation 2** - Follow New England Environmental Finance Center's (Sheils, M., & Webster, S. n.d.) best management practices for district-wide composting
- **Sustainable Practices Recommendation 3** - Institute sustainable practices in cafeteria purchases and operations