



Farm to Family Program Last Food Mile Grant Guidelines

Updated: December 16, 2025

Application Deadline: Friday, February 6, 2026, at 5 p.m. ET

Submit Applications via the MiAgGrants Online Grant Management System

Purpose

The aim of this grant program is to help bridge the “Last Food Mile” by developing transportation and distribution infrastructure in value chains for small- and mid-sized food producers across Michigan. Applicants for this funding opportunity must be a Michigan-based farm business or a Michigan-based food business/organization that works directly with Michigan-based farmers.

Definitions:

- **Food Value Chains:** [The USDA Agricultural Marketing Service describes food value chains](#) as a business strategy to “transform the traditional competitive seller/buyer relationships to a collaborative approach.” Value chains are trusting alliances among supply chain partners that recognize that creating maximum value for their products depends on interdependence, collaboration, and mutual support.
- **Last Food Mile** refers to the processes in the food value chain that occur immediately before the product reaches the consumer. Examples of the last food mile include:
 - Picking up apples from two local orchards to be sold at a farm stop.
 - Transporting frozen asparagus, fresh tomatoes, and locally baked bread from a food hub to a school district.
 - Bringing eggs and pork that were aggregated from three cooperative farms to a farmers' market for sale.
 - Delivering four pallets of fresh sweetcorn to a local grocery store.

- **Direct Marketing:** According to United States Department of Agriculture's Economic Research Service (USDA ERS), [direct marketing](#) occurs when a food producer sells food directly to consumers, a retail market, an institution, or an intermediate market (such as a food hub).

Background:

"Most of us juggle farm work with off-farm jobs, making it difficult to manage a full-time retail store. Yet the need for tools to help farmers reach customers and create value-added products is still very real."

- Erin K., Farmer from Attica, MI

The Farm-to-Family Program focuses on strengthening market opportunities for regenerative farming and for farmers that grow nutritious specialty and staple crops. These small and mid-sized producers supply a rapidly growing market for local foods, but the local and regional food infrastructure has not kept pace with growth in demand. The aim of this grant program is to help bridge the "Last Food Mile" by developing transportation and distribution infrastructure in value chains for small- and mid-sized food producers across Michigan."

Direct marketing is a key component of the solution to this problem. According to USDA ERS, producers with more direct marketing experience [had a higher percentage of earning positive net farm sales](#). An ERS study also found that beginning farmers with direct-to-consumer sales are [more likely to continue farming than beginning farmers](#) who market through traditional channels.

Intermediate markets that serve small- to mid-sized food producers, such as food hubs and farm stops, maintain the benefits of direct marketing by preserving the identity of a product from a local farm or business. Trucking and logistics was the second most-commonly reported challenge by respondents to [the 2021 National Food Hub Survey](#), and 67% of respondents expected direct-to-consumer sales to increase over the next two years.

Eligibility Requirements:

Applicants for this grant program must be a Michigan-based farm business or a Michigan-based food business/organization that works directly with Michigan-based farmers.

For the purposes of this grant program, MDARD retains the right to make the final decision about whether or not an entity qualifies as a Michigan-based farm or food business.

Eligible Projects:

Required:

- The project expands delivery of Michigan grown or produced foods to buyers who will eat or prepare the food (e.g., individual consumers, schools, hospitals, senior centers, restaurants, cafes, farm stops and other retail, etc.).
- The project establishes or expands at least one partnership with another business or organization to address local food distribution challenges regionally or locally. Partnership objectives may include but are not limited to:
 - **Cross-docking:** a logistical practice of “Just-In-Time Scheduling” where products are delivered directly from a manufacturer or a mode of transportation to a customer or another mode of transportation.
 - **Aggregation:** bringing together products from multiple sources to create a larger and more consistent supply. This process can be used to maximize efficiency among multiple suppliers that serve the same or similar buyers.
 - **Processing:** preserving and adding value to foods. Different types of processing include refrigeration, canning, freezing, and drying to preserve foods; washing, chopping, and bagging so that foods are more consumer-ready; and mixing ingredients for new products like jams, salsas, sauces, sausages, baked goods, and prepared meals.
 - **Market Access:** expanding producer access to a new customer base through promotion, site selection, incentivization, etc.
 - **Mentorship:** guidance from a person, business, or organization with experience implementing similar initiatives.
 - **Shared Use:** expanding local food distribution capacity by sharing equipment or infrastructure with another organization or business.
- The project proposal must demonstrate how the following goals will be met, and it must describe targets for each.
 - Increase the volume/weight of Michigan grown foods sold in Michigan communities.
 - Increase the dollar value of Michigan grown foods sold AND the revenue to Michigan farmers.
 - Increase the number of Michigan farmers reached, including those who use regenerative practices.

- Increase local and regional market access for a broader geographic distribution of Michigan farmers.
- Increase the number or types of consumers who have access to Michigan grown foods.
- The outcomes of the grant are planned to be achieved within one year.

Preferred:

- The project develops market channels for [regenerative agriculture](#) products.
- At least 80% of the proposed budget is allocated to a refrigerated vehicle.
- The project is innovative in its approach or desired outcomes.
- The project serves a geographic area and/or stakeholder groups that currently have limited access to local food value chains.
- Applicant does not have another active MDARD grant.

Eligible and Ineligible Costs

- Up to 10% Administrative Cost is allowed. Administrative costs are the grantee's allowable direct costs for the overall management of the grant.
- Salaries, wages, staff benefits, and travel costs are not eligible costs under this grant.
- Eligible refrigerated vehicles must be valued at \$100,000 or less and paid in full by grant dollars.

Application Process:

- Applications for the Last Food Mile Grant are due **Friday, February 6, 2026, at 5 p.m. ET.**
- Only one application per applicant will be considered.
- Grants will be awarded a maximum amount of \$100,000. Please submit applications in whole dollar amounts and round to the nearest \$1.
- Applicants must use the Last Food Mile Grant application within [the MIAgGrants online grant management system](#) to apply for this grant.
- Applicants must establish a MiLogin account to submit grant applications via the MiAgGrants system.
 - MiLogin allows users to access many state services and systems online, across multiple departments, using a single user ID and password.

- For increased security, MiLogin requires a multifactor authentication before you can access MiAgGrants or other state systems.
 - There are two primary types of MiLogin accounts:
 - [Citizen's Account](#): An individual using State of Michigan online services for their own personal transaction.
 - [Business Account](#): An individual using State of Michigan online services on behalf of a business, organization, or corporation.
 - If you currently have a Citizen and/or Business Account to access State of Michigan online services and applications, you should already have a MiLogin account. Please use your user ID and password from those systems to log into the MiLogin portal, instead of creating a new account.
- Please be sure to submit the entire application. All sections must be complete to be considered for funding.
 - Complete and save all pages of the application, then navigate on the left side menu of the application and scroll down to the "Status options" section. Click "Submit Application or Application Submitted" to send the application to MDARD for review.
 - After submitting the application, please check the status of the document on the "document landing page" and make sure it shows "Application in Review" to confirm the application's submission.
 - Once submitted, your application status will move from in-progress to submitted in the system.
- If you have any questions or need help with the MiAgGrants system, please reach out to the systems administrator, Muneeb Khan at KhanM16@michigan.gov.
- MDARD reserves the right, at its sole discretion, to reject an application that:
 - Does not meet the program requirements including scope, eligibility, and allowable grant dollar use.
 - Is received after the deadline.
 - Is incomplete or missing any of the required forms, narrative, and budget.
 - Does not follow the outlined application requirements.

Reporting Process:

- All awardees must be registered as a vendor in the Vendor Self Service system with the State of Michigan prior to signing the grant agreement. Registration can be completed via [SIGMA Vendor Self Service](#).

- Each grantee will be required to submit written reports and appropriate financial documentation to MDARD. Grantees may also be required to report on the outcomes and impact of their grant up to three years after the grant period ends.
- Reporting must include metrics to assess progress towards measurable outcomes listed in the grant application and/or grant agreement.

Contact:

For more information about the Last Food Mile Grant Program, please email MDARD-FarmToFamily@michigan.gov or [schedule a meeting with the Farm to Family Team](#).

Equal Opportunity:

The State of Michigan and the Department of Agriculture & Rural Development prohibit discrimination on the basis of religion, race, color, national origin, age, sex, sexual orientation, gender identity or expression, height, weight, marital status, partisan considerations, or a disability or genetic information that is unrelated to the person's ability to perform the duties of a particular job or position.

To file a complaint of discrimination, please contact: MDARD Office of Legal Affairs, 525 West Allegan, Lansing, MI 48909, or call 517-284-5729.

You may also contact the Michigan Department of Civil Rights at:

- Phone: 313-456-3700
- Fax: 313-456-3701
- Toll-Free: 800-482-3604
- TTY: 877-878-8464
- Email: MDCRServiceCenter@michigan.gov

Reasonable Accommodations

The Michigan Department of Agriculture & Rural Development (MDARD) strives to ensure site accessibility for all its users. Our grant process is inclusive and accessible to all individuals, including those with disabilities. If you require reasonable accommodations, please respond with the following information to MDARD-FarmToFamily@michigan.gov.

When contacting us, please include the following information so that we can respond in a manner that is helpful to you:

- Nature of the accessibility issue
- Web address of the content you are attempting to access
- Your preferred format for the content
- Your contact information

Please submit accessibility requests no later than **Friday, January 16, 2025**. Please allow up to two weeks for the processing of this request. Thank you.

