



New York Farm to School Institute 2021-2022



What is the NY Farm to School Institute?

Farm to School programs across the United States enrich the connection communities have with fresh, healthy, local foods by changing food purchasing and education practices through schools and early childhood education centers. Students gain access to healthy foods as well as educational opportunities, school gardens, cooking lessons, a greater connection to their local food systems and their environment, and farm field trips. Thanks to investments in Governor Andrew Cuomo's No Student Goes Hungry Initiative in 2018, Farm to School has the potential to grow exponentially across New York State. To realize the full potential of these new programs, schools need more assistance creating successful Farm to School programs and connecting with farmers. The NY Farm to School Institute offers a comprehensive learning opportunity for food service staff, educators, administrators, and community partners in New York schools to develop and refine their Farm to School programs, and to help bring more New York grown food into the cafeteria and the classroom.

Who Will Benefit from the NYS Farm to School Institute?

Farm to school programs will offer a direct opportunity to improve the health of students while strengthening the local agricultural economy by bringing farm fresh local foods into school cafeterias statewide. Currently, a knowledge gap exists in how to get food from the farm to the student plate. The Institute fills this need by offering school teams enhanced technical knowledge and support on how to procure and prepare local foods, tools for community engagement, and classroom and culinary education. The NY Farm to School Institute will also guide participants in using Farm to School programs to address current issues, such as racial equity, food justice, and climate change. The 2021-22 institute will have in-depth programming on utilizing culturally relevant farm to school programming in the cafeteria, classroom, and communities to further efforts in diversity, inclusion, equity, and justice. Participating schools will also become alumni of a 'NY Farm to School Institute Network', continuing to share best practices and resources with others championing farm to school for years to come.

Why does NYS need an Institute for Farm to School?

The NY Farm to School Institute is modeled after the longstanding Northeast Farm to School Institute but adapted for New York's unique school landscape. New York is home to the largest school district in the country, as well as large urban and suburban districts, and smaller rural schools. Hosting a state-specific Institute addresses this disparity by providing tailored support to schools of all sizes in creating FTS programs. Furthermore, with the Governor's reimbursement program, the need for training is timely and necessary to help schools find ways to source, procure, and serve more NY grown foods for students across the State.



Does participation in the Institute guarantee that we will reach the 30%?

We cannot guarantee that each of our school teams will reach 30% local procurement. This is due to many barriers and challenges presented to individual districts in regard to geographic location, COVID-19 and school closures, lack of administrative capacity, as well as many other challenges that schools across the state are currently facing with local procurement. However, we provide schools with resources, opportunities, and technical trainings in order to increase local procurement. These opportunities include trainings on menu planning, connections with farmers across the state who are poised to sell to institutions, as well as connections with region-specific procurement experts and coordinators. If your team's goal is to eventually reach 30% local procurement, our team will guide you to create an action plan to reach this goal and provide you with the resources we have to support your team.

Can NYC schools apply to the Institute?

Yes! We welcome applications from schools located throughout the five boroughs. For the past two years, the NYC Department of Education's Office of Food and Nutrition Services has participated as a school team in our Institute. We have worked closely with the DOE, who continues to make advances toward reaching 30% local procurement, branding their Farm to School Program, expanding their Garden to Café program, and ensuring that local NY produce is included on each menu. On top of connections with the DOE's farm to school team, we can offer targeted assistance with curriculum development, school garden and taste test resources, as well as connections throughout the city. Our FINYS Coordinator also lives in the city, and (COVID-dependent) is able to travel throughout the five boroughs to assist and coach our NYC teams.



I am a Farm to School Coordinator who works with multiple schools. Can I put together an application for one team that encompasses team members from all of these schools?

Our programming works best for individual schools. Sometimes, we will take a school district, though this is on a case-by-case basis. If you work with multiple schools, we recommend that the schools that are ready to participate in the Institute each submit their own application. You are welcome to serve as a team member for each accepted school, though you may want to consider your own capacity to participate on multiple teams.

What sort of time commitment should I expect?

This depends on your team's specific goals. If your action plan outlines many large goals, you may have to put in more time to complete these goals. Most teams can expect to spend an average of 3-5 hours per month on the Institute for participation in team meetings, cohort networking sessions, and occasional workshops. Any taste tests, school garden activities, or community events will of course take more time, and we recommend these activities be split evenly among your team members. The team lead will likely spend the most number of hours on farm to school activities, as this person is our main point of contact, and will be responsible for coordinating their team's meetings and communicating questions, a need for resources, or updates back to us. Please keep in mind that there is no specific time requirement for this program, and it is completely scalable to your team's goals as well as shifting school schedules. We understand that during the pandemic, schedules are very uncertain and most education personnel do not have much free time, so if you find yourself overwhelmed with FTS activities at any point, we encourage you to communicate this to us!

Is this a grant?

In short, no. The New York Farm to School Institute is a professional development program with the main objective of helping schools and early childhood programs develop their farm to school programs by providing resources and support. Teams will develop a farm to school action plan and spend the year working towards the objectives outlined in the plan. FINYS will provide schools with a \$5000 stipend to aid with the implementation of their action plans, but that is not the main function or focus of this program.

For more information about the institute, please visit www.finys.org/institute or email us at finys@farmland.org with any questions.

