

MASSACHUSETTS FRESH GRANT PROGRAM OVERVIEW: FY24 AWARDEES

In 2021, the Massachusetts Food for Massachusetts Kids Coalition advocated for the establishment of the first state grant program to fund efforts that connect students in early childhood centers and K-12 schools to local agriculture through food education, local sourcing, and community partnerships. With significant support from legislative champions across Massachusetts, \$1,000,000 of American Rescue Plan Act (ARPA) Funds were allocated to pilot the MA FRESH Grant Program.



Administered by the MA Department of Elementary and Secondary Education (DESE), in partnership with the MA Department of Early Education and Care, this program provides funds for K-12 and early education and care providers to start up or expand their local foods purchasing and education efforts. Funds can be used for infrastructure investments such as kitchen equipment or garden installation as well as professional development for educators and school nutrition staff, and enrichment and educational activities for students.

In early 2024 DESE awarded over \$400,000 to 23 school districts and childcare centers across the Commonwealth to support local food and local food education in schools. This second round of applications saw over \$2.5M in requests from nearly 80 applicants.

K-12 Grant Awardees

Codman Academy
Community Charter School of Cambridge
Essex North Shore Agricultural and
Technical School
Greenfield Public Schools
Haverhill Public Schools
Holyoke Public Schools
Lenox Public Schools
Mashpee Public Schools
Medway Public Schools
Norfolk County Agricultural High School
Prospect Hill Academy
Salem Public Schools
Webster Public Schools
Westford Public Schools



Early Education Grant Awardees

ABCD Head Start and Children's Service
Boys & Girls Club of Metro South
Community Action Pioneer Valley
Head Start & Early Learning Program
Ellis Early Learning
Holyoke Chicopee Head Start
MetroWest YMCA
Mystic Valley YMCA
PACE Head Start
Waltham Boys & Girls Club

FOR MORE INFORMATION

Please visit <https://mafoodformakids.org/farm-to-school-grant>



CODMAN ACADEMY (DORCHESTER)

Award Amount: \$46,322

Codman Academy is building a strong farm to school foundation through local product sourcing, kitchen staff training, and the installation of indoor growing systems via their new Urban Roots initiative. Through this initiative, Codman Academy is teaching urban agriculture curriculum to students K-12, providing hands-on growing experience to middle school students, and hosting a Controlled Environment Agriculture Readiness certification program for high school students to improve workforce readiness. When students complete the certification program they will be able to manage indoor growing systems and run the Codman Youth Farmers' Market.

ESSEX NORTH SHORE AGRICULTURAL AND TECHNICAL SCHOOL

Award Amount: \$50,000

Essex North Shore Agricultural and Technical School is developing a robust food safety program by expanding their cooling space, building a vegetable-washing station, training staff and students, and more. These investments have allowed them to achieve the needed certification to safely serve their produce in the school cafeteria. Essex Tech students now have access to the freshest possible food and have become more involved in their local food system as food-literate citizens and eaters in their own communities.

HAVERHILL PUBLIC SCHOOLS

Award Amount: \$49,940

The hydroponic garden project for the Bartlett School and Assessment Center, within Haverhill Public Schools, is increasing healthy eating habits among its students by growing a variety of nutrient-rich vegetables and herbs to integrate into their school food program. Grant funding is being used to provide students with hands-on participation in the garden's setup and maintenance. Students learn about plant growth, nutrition, and sustainability, fostering an appreciation for fresh produce. Their project offers a sensory-rich environment while encouraging healthy eating habits and empowering students to make informed food choices for a balanced diet.

COMMUNITY CHARTER SCHOOL OF CAMBRIDGE

Award Amount: \$7,620

The Community Charter School of Cambridge is using FRESH Grant funding to highlight agricultural education, the use of local produce, and students' cultural culinary traditions. They are partnering with Land's Sake Farm (Weston, MA) to create opportunities for students to learn first hand about farm operations and see how produce is grown and harvested. The school is organizing cooking classes that take place at the Foundry in Cambridge using produce from Land's Sake. Students in these classes share family or cultural dishes they prepare and eat together.

GREENFIELD PUBLIC SCHOOLS

Award Amount: \$13,514

Greenfield Public Schools is collaborating with a local non-profit, Just Roots, to launch a new farm to school initiative in their elementary schools. All elementary students are participating in monthly taste tests of local foods following the Harvest of the Month program. Additionally, all third grade students will visit Greenfield Community Farm for a curriculum-aligned Fall field trip along with two additional food literacy lessons during the 2024-2025 school year.

HOLYOKE PUBLIC SCHOOLS

Award Amount: \$23,479

Holyoke Public Schools is building new gardens and expanding pre-existing gardens at their six elementary schools. With help from FoodCorps Service Members, students are participating in the growing process, increasing their food literacy and sense of belonging in the school community, and developing their willingness to try new things. Funds are also being used to launch a classroom taste test program so students can try the food they are growing in the garden and give feedback on their preferences.

LENOX PUBLIC SCHOOLS

Award Amount: \$11,010

Lenox Public Schools is using MA FRESH Grant funds for a new initiative to grow produce and serve it in their school cafeterias. After their first year participating in farm to school activities, they are excited to have obtained two Fork Farms Hydroponic systems, allowing students to be involved in the growing process and to open the door to more food systems conversations.

MASHPEE PUBLIC SCHOOLS

Award Amount: \$36,500

Mashpee Middle-High School, in collaboration with Barnstable County Cooperative Extension Office of Nutrition Education and Food Safety, Master Gardeners of Cape Cod, and the Health Ministry, is building and sustaining an educational farm. The produce they are growing reflects the diverse cultural backgrounds of the students and is being integrated into the school cafeteria menu. The farm provides an opportunity for students to learn about food sovereignty and systems, and to broaden their culinary horizons while elevating both the quality of life and academic achievements of all.

MEDWAY PUBLIC SCHOOLS

Award Amount: \$7,000

The Memorial School in Medway Public Schools is taking students on farm field trips, hosting produce tasting events featuring local crops like bok choy, zucchini, and kale, and holding a local food systems poster contest. They are including second to third grade students in programming this year in a school-based farming educational experience in partnership with Medway Community Farm.

NORFOLK CO. AGRICULTURAL HIGH SCHOOL

Award Amount: \$12,493

Norfolk County Agricultural High School is expanding the availability of their Abundance Garden produce to students and the greater community. They are installing a vegetable wash and pack area, and cold storage in their cafeteria, allowing them to fully utilize their garden by ensuring more fresh food gets into the cafeteria.

PROSPECT HILL ACADEMY (SOMERVILLE)

Award Amount: \$47,810

Prospect Hill Academy is creating a farm to school program focusing on educating students about health, nutrition, and agricultural processes. Prospect Hill's 9th graders are piloting the program, providing them with transformational experiential learning opportunities, including a visit to the Farm School (Athol, MA) connecting them to the land and work that goes into planting, growing, and harvesting fresh produce. They will be sharing what they've learned with the entire school community.

SALEM PUBLIC SCHOOLS

Funding received: \$17,050

Salem Public Schools are supporting professional development for elementary school teachers to implement farm to school curriculum in their classrooms. This program expansion includes experiential learning in school gardens, Harvest of the Month taste tests, culinary and nutrition lessons, and providing field trips to local farms for fifth graders.

WEBSTER PUBLIC SCHOOLS

Award Amount: \$16,900

Webster Public Schools are strengthening and expanding the farm to school efforts in their district by increasing school community involvement. Webster has built a multi-purpose school garden benefiting all members of the school community that enhances a sense of belonging and empowerment. Students are actively participating in ways that support their health and awareness of sustainability principles.

WESTFORD PUBLIC SCHOOLS

Award Amount: \$18,990

The multi-disciplinary team at Nabnasset School (Grades PK-2) are creating an inviting and highly visible garden-based learning lab for their community. The students are experiencing the wonder of how food is grown, and appreciating its impact on life systems. Through this initiative students have the opportunity to explore gardening, observe living things, and learn in a beautiful and peaceful landscape.

ABCD HEAD START (BOSTON)

Award Amount: \$23,437

ABCD Head Start & Children's Services is building a new garden, investing in professional development for food service staff, and purchasing equipment to increase access to fresh produce for children and their families. The new garden will allow teachers to enhance their curriculum, access green space in an urban environment, and teach children about gardening and nutrition. Food service staff are increasing their knowledge and ability to prepare unprocessed food from the garden and are holding taste testing events for teachers, children, and families.

BOYS & GIRLS CLUB OF METRO SOUTH (TAUNTON)

Award Amount: \$50,000

Boys & Girls Clubs of Metro South is expanding their innovative food system curricula. They are launching their third hydroponic Freight Farm, and grant funds are facilitating the adaptation and delivery of comprehensive nutrition education programs, as well as supporting youth engagement, community food security and development.

COMMUNITY ACTION PIONEER VALLEY HEAD START & EARLY LEARNING PROGRAM

(GREENFIELD)

Award Amount: \$8,550

Community Action Pioneer Valley, Head Start & Early Learning Program is providing professional development for their food service staff and expanding their educational programming to promote food literacy and nutritional education for their students. Their weekly 'Nibbles Snack Activity' allows children to experience hands-on learning by preparing, cooking, and eating locally grown foods in the form of a nutritious snack.

ELLIS EARLY LEARNING (BOSTON)

Funding received: \$25,000

Ellis Early Learning is promoting hands-on learning experiences related to food and nutrition. With help from Green City Growers, they are increasing guided exposure to their garden allowing for more engaged interdisciplinary learning that helps their students prioritize local and sustainable food options. Through this partnership, their students are working with urban agriculture experts in order to better understand where the food they eat comes from.

HOLYOKE CHICOPEE HEAD START

Award Amount: \$30,379

Holyoke Chicopee Head Start is expanding the use of existing gardens at two of their program sites in Springfield and Holyoke to fully integrate gardening and healthy foods into year round use within the school curriculum. With support from Mass Audubon, the schools are receiving professional development and resources to bolster nutrition and gardening education for students and promote family and community engagement. Increased garden use is allowing for more food to be integrated into school meals and a larger diversity of culturally relevant crops to be grown and shared with the community.

METROWEST YMCA (FRAMINGHAM)

Funding received: \$48,927

The MetroWest YMCA is enhancing its commitment to promoting holistic well-being by expanding their garden initiatives, growing fruits and vegetables, and fostering nutritional awareness and food education within their early learning centers. They are providing hands-on experiences such as classroom taste tests, gardening lessons, and cooking classes in an effort to educate students and their families about the benefits of locally produced food. Beyond the classroom, they are training staff to prepare meals with unprocessed, local ingredients, promoting individual health and environmental sustainability.

MYSTIC VALLEY YMCA (MALDEN)

Award Amount: \$8,675

The Mystic Valley YMCA is providing hydroponic garden towers for children in their programs to explore plant life cycles, produce growing, and healthy habit formation. Produce from these towers is being used in cooking classes for elementary-aged children. The garden towers are also being used throughout Mystic Valley's preschool programming and the childcare centers in Malden and Medford to promote social-emotional development and teach STEAM principles.

PACE HEAD START (NEW BEDFORD)

Award Amount: \$25,000

PACE Head Start is planting a community garden of fresh fruits and vegetables along with a small orchard. In partnership with Bristol County Agricultural High School, high school interns will work with students to plant and tend to the produce growing in the garden. The garden produce is used to supplement their meal program and is incorporated into culturally relevant recipes and family engagement opportunities.

WALTHAM BOYS & GIRLS CLUB

Award Amount: \$25,000

Waltham Boys & Girls Club is implementing, "Get Fresh," a hands-on science program teaching healthy habits, environmental awareness, personal growth, and teamwork. Participating youth visit Land's Sake Farm and get to experience first-hand how produce is grown while building their knowledge of horticulture, food systems, and life cycles. The Get Fresh program culminates in a community dinner where students prepare a meal featuring the produce they have grown for their families and other guests.