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Illinois Department of Agriculture Announces \$3.6 Million in Grant Funds for Local Food Infrastructure

SPRINGFIELD – The Illinois Department of Agriculture (IDOA) announced plans to distribute \$3.6 million in fiscal year 2026 at the Everything Local conference in Springfield on Wednesday. The funds, which were appropriated in the FY26 state budget, will be used to support local food processing, aggregation, and distribution. Grants will be available for collaborative projects from \$1,000 to \$250,000 and for individual projects from \$1,000 to \$75,000.

“Strong agriculture depends on strong infrastructure,” said **IDOA Director Jerry Costello II**. “The Local Food Infrastructure Grant program gives Illinois farmers the processing, aggregation, and distribution capacity they need to ensure Illinois-grown food can reach consumers.”

Applications for grant funding will be available February 18, 2026, on the Illinois Department of Agriculture website.

“Everyone benefits when we empower our local farmers,” said **State Senator Doris Turner (D-Springfield), Chair of the Senate Agriculture Committee**. “By fortifying the food system, we are supporting our local farmers and mitigating food insecurity. This funding will expand access to fresh, local foods, strengthen the local economy and grow the food supply chain.”

“When we say farm-to-home food, we forget about the critical infrastructure in between,” said **State Senator David Koehler (D-Peoria), member of the Senate Agriculture Committee**. “This investment ensures that our food makes it from farm to local food processor and distribution safely and cleanly to your plates at home.”

“With food prices rising across Illinois, investing in local food infrastructure is no longer optional, it’s essential,” said **State Representative Sonya Harper (D-Chicago), Chair of the House Agriculture and Conservation Committee**. “We created this program to strengthen our farmers, shorten the supply chain and ensure Illinois families can access affordable, locally grown food. I’ve spent my career fighting to move our state from food deserts and fragile systems toward real, durable solutions, and this investment helps put that vision into action.”

Eligible applicants include Illinois residents who store, process, package, aggregate or distribute value-added agricultural products or plan to do so. These entities must meet one of the following criteria:

- an Illinois farm with fewer than 50 employees
- an Illinois cooperative with fewer than 50 employees
- an Illinois slaughter and/or processing facility with fewer than 50 employees. Slaughter and/or processing facilities must be USDA or state licensed or be a custom exempt slaughter and/or processing facility
- an Illinois food business with fewer than 50 employees
- an Illinois food hub with fewer than 50 employees
- an Illinois nonprofit organization
- a unit of local government in Illinois

To encourage further expansion of the local food industry, all grant funding must be used for purchasing, leasing to own, renting, building or installing infrastructure related to the processing, storage, aggregation, or distribution of value-added agricultural products.

Those interested can prepare for the upcoming application by pre-registering with SAM.gov and the GATA Grantee Portal.

Additional information about the program, supporting links and helpful guidance on getting ahead on the application can be found on the [Department's website](#).

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