ILLINOIS LOCAL FOOD INFRASTRUCTURE GRANT
CSFA NUMBER 406-01-3252
RESPONSE TO APPLICANT QUESTIONS

Questions received from February 25, 2026 after 4:00 PM (CST) to
March 4, 2026 at 4:00 PM (CST)

Date Submitted: 2/27/2026

Question:
May publicly owned food pantries apply for funding to improve/expand their facilities to distribute value-added foods to pantry users?

Response:
The response to this question is currently listed in the Frequently Asked Questions, under the heading of "Eligibility". "What expenditures qualify for reimbursement through LFIG funding?"

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. [505 ILCS 92/15(4)]

Allowable expenses include, but are not limited to, costs to purchase, lease, or install:

Equipment used in the production of value-added agricultural products [505 ILCS 92/15(4)(A)].

Sanitizing equipment.

Milling or pressing equipment [505 ILCS 92/15(4)(B)].

Honey processing equipment and packaging including mini extractors lines, extractors, uncappers, dehydrators, creamers, warmers, heated sumps, bottling tanks and bottlers.

Syrup processing equipment and packaging including syrup evaporators, cookers, finishers, canners and bottlers.

Creamery or milk product processing and packaging equipment [505 ILCS 92/15(4)(C)].

Food hub development or expansion [505 ILCS 92/15(4)(D)].

Cooler walls, freezers and refrigeration units [505 ILCS 92/15(4)(E)].

Grading, packing, labeling, packaging, or sorting equipment [505 ILCS 92/15(4)(F)].

Refrigerated trucks [505 ILCS 92/15(4)(G)].

Custom exempt mobile slaughter units that meet all Federal and State regulations, including being licensed as an IDOA Type II slaughter/processing facility [505 ILCS 92/15(4)(H)].

Livestock, meat, and poultry processing equipment (including fixtures or equipment necessary to expand animal throughput, processing capacity, the amount or type of products produced or processing speed, equipment necessary for compliance with federal hazard analysis and critical control point (HACCP) plan) [505 ILCS 92/15(4)(H)].

Agroforestry processing equipment [505 ILCS 92/15(4)(I)].

Local fish, wild caught fish, and shrimp processing [505 ILCS 92/15(4)(J)].

Aquaponic and or hydroponic equipment.

Equipment for school meal scratch cooking (including, but not limited to refrigerators, freezers, ovens (convection, combi, or steamer), warming/holding equipment, serving tables (hot or cold), milk coolers, or dish machines.

Grant funding cannot be used for any of the following parts of a proposal:

Labor, marketing, or promotion or for the costs of production agriculture, including the costs for the purchase of hoop houses, irrigation, breeding, animal housing or other infrastructure related to starting or increasing agricultural production. [505 ILCS 92/15(4)]

Wages or travel costs.

Portions of a project that have already received funding or been reimbursed by another federal or state grant program.

Purchase or rental of a building or facility.

Land acquisition or associated fees.

Grant funding cannot be used to recoup previously spent money on the project. [8 Ill. Adm. Code 340.30]

Date Submitted: 2/28/2026

Question:
I see that refrigerated trucks are eligible. What about freezer trucks or trailers for meat business for transport of meat and storage?

Response:
The entity must store, process, package, aggregate or distribute value-added agricultural products or plan to do so. 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. [505 ILCS 92/15(4)]. “Value-added agricultural product” as “any farm or agricultural product or by-product that has its value enhanced through processing in Illinois, packaging in Illinois, or any other activity in Illinois.” [505 ILCS 92/5].

Date Submitted: 3/1/2026

Question:
Does a restarting small food business (with prior cottage food activity in 2024, but currently inactive while I rebuild) qualify as an “Illinois food business” that “plans to” process/distribute value-added agricultural products? Or is there a strict requirement for continuous 3+ years of “established” operations with documentation?

Response:
Points will be awarded for proposals from established farmers and food businesses. [8 Ill. Adm. Code 340.60(b)]

"Established" means an entity that has been doing business in the agricultural or food sectors for at least three years. [8 Ill. Adm. Code 340.10(b)]. For proof of "established": at least two types of documentation per year for at least three years, including:

A) Documentation from a source other than the applicant of the date the business was started in Illinois.

B) Documentation from government agencies of the business' operations or activities; tax records; media coverage describing the project or business's first actions (or prior actions so long as they meet the definition of "established" in the rules). [8 Ill. Adm. Code 340.60(c)]

"Food Business" or "Food Sector Business" means institutions engaged in producing, processing, distributing, and selling foods; or the business of production of food and fiber, ranching and raising of livestock, aquaculture, and all other farming and agricultural related industries.

Date Submitted: 3/1/2026

Question:

If the “established” proof (e.g., multiple docs per year for 3 years) is a barrier for newer/restarting operations, are there exceptions, flexibilities, or alternative ways to

demonstrate readiness (e.g., detailed business plan, commitment to source from businesses, cottage food registration)?

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See also 8 Ill. Adm. Code 340.60, Application Evaluation Criteria: https://www.ilga.gov/commission/jcar/admincode/008/008003400000600R.html

Date Submitted: 3/1/2026

Question:

Would facility improvements (garage conversion for food-safe processing) and equipment purchases qualify as eligible infrastructure under value-added processing?

Response:

“Value-added agricultural product” is “any farm or agricultural product or by-product that has its value enhanced through processing in Illinois, packaging in Illinois, or any other activity in Illinois.” [505 ILCS 92/5]

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. [505 ILCS 92/15(4)]

Allowable expenses include, but are not limited to, costs to purchase, lease, or install:

Equipment used in the production of value-added agricultural products [505 ILCS 92/15(4)(A)].

Sanitizing equipment.

Milling or pressing equipment [505 ILCS 92/15(4)(B)].

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Creamery or milk product processing and packaging equipment [505 ILCS 92/15(4)(C)].

Food hub development or expansion [505 ILCS 92/15(4)(D)].

Cooler walls, freezers and refrigeration units [505 ILCS 92/15(4)(E)].

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Custom exempt mobile slaughter units that meet all Federal and State regulations, including being licensed as an IDOA Type II slaughter/processing facility [505 ILCS 92/15(4)(H)].

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Wages or travel costs.

Portions of a project that have already received funding or been reimbursed by another federal or state grant program.

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Land acquisition or associated fees.

Grant funding cannot be used to recoup previously spent money on the project. [8 Ill. Adm. Code 340.30]

Date Submitted: 3/1/2026

Question:

Any guidance or tips for woman-owned or very small startups to strengthen an application, especially emphasizing local sourcing and community impact in Will County?

Response:

See 8 Ill. Adm. Code 340.60, Application Evaluation Criteria: https://www.ilga.gov/commission/jcar/admincode/008/008003400000600R.html]

See also Frequently Asked Questions, under the heading of "Application Assistance". " Where can I go to receive help with my application?"

Some Small Business Development Centers (SBDC) offer grant writing support. Contact your local SBDC to take advantage of services available for your project: https://sbdc.illinois.gov/find-a-center/sbdc.html

Refer to this document: The Basic Steps in Planning and Writing a Successful Grant Application: https://dceo.illinois.gov/content/dam/soi/en/web/dceo/smallbizassistance/beginhere/documents/proposalwriting2003.pdf

Date Submitted: 3/2/2025

Question:
I'm reaching out with a question regarding the "Proof of the number of employees" application requirements. A client that I'm working with doesn't file IRS Form 941, instead they file 1099. Is this satisfactory?

Response:
If Individuals providing services for your entity have their earnings reported on IRS Form 1099, they are independent contractors and are not included in the employee count as related to this funding opportunity. If you don't have employees, please provide a statement to that effect.

Date Submitted: 3/2/2026

Question: I ran across this email address in an ag paper my husband gets. I am looking for info. if there are any Dept. Of Agriculture grants that can help local church groups in Illinois purchase food for weekend meals of about 8 items each week. We have been doing this over 6 years out of our church with about 70-80 students identified as food insecure on weekends during the school year and provide around 30 students who over the summer pick up a bag at our local food distribution. Funding is always a concern. If you can guide me to any state level ag programs we might be able to access, we would greatly appreciate it.

Response:

Visit https://agr.illinois.gov/assistance/illinoisfarmprograms/lfig.html for guidance on the Local Food Infrastructure Grant.

Date Submitted: 3/2/2026

Question: I am working on an LFI grant application. We are having some issues on the Amplifund website. There is a spot on the e-application where they require you to submit the applicants UEI Number. The box to enter the UEI number only allows for up to 11 characters. The UEI number has 12 characters. We are unable to move forward with our application submittal, as we cannot save/continue the application, as the website errors. How do you want us to proceed? Are others having issues with this as well?

Response:

The application has been updated to allow 12 characters.

Please review that the application is complete. Incomplete sections are green circles with no checkmark or white circles.

Euna Grants powered by AmpliFund displays a validation error for anything that is not complete. For applicants that are running into a UEI Character limit error, please refresh the application page.

Date Submitted: 3/2/2026

Original Question: When I enter my UEI number, it is too long for the system by (1) digit. Looking for assistance.

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Date Submitted: 3/3/2026

Question:
Would a Community Garden Program managed by a local unit of government be eligible for the funding if all necessary pre-requisites are met considering the local unit of government is utilizing subawards to store, process, package, aggregate, or distribute value-added agricultural products?

Response:
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Collaborative Projects are allowed. "Collaborative" or "Collaboration" means two or more entities working together on a project. [8 Ill. Adm. Code 340.10(b)]. Each entity working on the project must be identified in the application. Collaborative project applicants must identify which entity is the lead. Lead entities for collaborative project applicants will be

responsible for all grant reporting requirements. [8 Ill. Adm. Code 340.20(c)]. In a collaborative project, only the entity identified as the lead in the application will receive the grant funds. [8 Ill. Adm. Code 340.40(b)].

Date Submitted: 03/3/2026

Question: I'm writing to confirm eligibility for a proposed project under the current LFIG opportunity.

An Illinois producer is considering the purchase and installation of a truck scale at his farm. The scale would allow him to weigh organic alfalfa, silage, and corn on-site, improving operational efficiency and reducing the need to transport loads to nearby commercial scales. He would also make the scale available to other local producers at low or no cost.

Can you confirm whether a truck scale purchase/installation like this is eligible? If community access is relevant to eligibility, what level of community benefit/documentation is required?

Response:
The entity must store, process, package, aggregate or distribute value-added agricultural products or plan to do so. 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. [505 ILCS 92/15(4)]. "Value-added agricultural product" is "any farm or agricultural product or by-product that has its value enhanced through processing in Illinois, packaging in Illinois, or any other activity in Illinois." [505 ILCS 92/5]. The products mentioned do not meet the definition of a value-added agricultural product for the purpose of this funding opportunity.

Date Submitted: 03/3/2026

Question: Does the following statement indicate a total of six documents, two documents for each of the past three years, or is the statement meant to indicate that the two documents would each be in regards to the past three years? "For proof of "established": at least two types of documentation per year for at least three years."

Response:
8 Ill. Adm. Code 340.60(c)(2) requires "at least two types of documentation per year for at least three years . . . ." Therefore, a minimum of six documents is required.

Date Submitted: 3/4/2026

Original Question: I'm writing to confirm eligibility for a proposed project under the current LFIG opportunity.

- One individual applied for and received a grant last year, and a family member who co-operates the same farm plans to apply this year. Would this be considered a new applicant, or would it be treated as a prior awardee since the farm operation is the same?
- If the applicant is considered a previous awardee, could you clarify how this may affect the application's competitiveness or scoring?
- Additionally, do you require farms to have an EIN to be eligible to apply?

Response:
The Local Food Infrastructure Grant is being administered by the Illinois Department of Agriculture for the first time. Grant awards under the Local Food Infrastructure Grant administered by an organization other than the Illinois Department of Agriculture do not impact eligibility.

To be qualified for a grant award, an entity must be registered in the Grant Accountability and Transparency Act (GATA) Grantee Portal, https://grants.illinois.gov/portal/, at the time of grant application. The portal will verify that the entity has a valid FEIN number (https://www.irs.gov/businesses/small-businesses-self-employed/get-an-employeridentification-number)

Date Submitted: 3/4/2026

Question: How should a public university classify itself for eligibility purposes? Should we apply as a nonprofit organization or as a unit of local government in Illinois? We have reviewed the FAQ section under eligibility but would appreciate confirmation to ensure we are applying under the correct category.

Response:
The applicant is asked to check the option that best describes the entity and provide Proof of Entity documentation. "Proof of Entity" documentation is identified as, "Federal Employer Identification Number, FEIN issuance letter from the Internal Revenue Service, or registration with the Illinois Secretary of State to do business in Illinois."

Date Submitted: 3/4/2026

Question:

Our capacity building grant project involves replacing some very expensive components of a large cooler that are nearly 60 years old. Replacement would help to increase the capacity of storage by at least 50% and extend the availability of cold storage to handle additional food to put into the emergency food supply. That's on one cooler.

The other project we have talked about is changing the interior doors on all three of their large coolers. If you can imagine inside of a warehouse and cooler, the interior doors are the ones that are bumped continuously with forklifts going in and out. Those doors have been repaired or replaced so often it's hard to keep track. Technology has advanced such that there are overhead rolling doors now that have sensors to open and close and replace those interior bumper doors. They essentially decrease downtime and also decrease the loss of cold air that escapes the coolers and change the climate for holding produce (imagine that struggle in July and August). Essentially, when produce is not held at a consistent temperature, that's when you get a faster decline of highly perishable produce that could otherwise be used for retail, value added products we make in the kitchen, and even the produce that goes into the LFPA program and into the emergency food system. It can result in a lot of produce wasted and loss of income.

I just want to make sure that the proposed LFIG project would not be interpreted as matching with other grant funds and make it ineligible. While one set of the doors would touch the cooler that we're repairing in another grant, the purpose they serve in improving the operation is different.

I explored the FAQ pretty thoroughly and cannot see that it really addresses this scenario.

Response:
8 Ill. Adm. Code 340.50(b)(9)-(10) provides: "Applicants shall provide the following information about the proposed project, and any other information required in the application . . .

9) Whether the applicant has received government-funding for any part of this project already, and if they have, the following information about the funding:

A) When it was received.

B) The dollar amount of funding received.

C) What part of the project received this funding.

D) Whether the funds were disbursed as a grant or a loan.

E) The agency disbursing the funds.

10) Whether the applicant has applied for other government-funding for this project that is pending at the time of their application for this grant, and if they have, the following information about that application:

A) When the application was submitted.

B) The dollar amount of funding requested by the applicant.

C) What part of the project the funds were intended to support.

D) The agency disbursing the funds."