

Growing Impact Fund – Grant Guidelines

Neighborhood Farms USA (NFUSA) | Community Impact Program

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1. Purpose of the Fund

The Growing Impact Fund supports neighborhood-scale farms and community-based food projects that strengthen local food systems, expand access to fresh, nutrient-dense food, and advance environmental stewardship through regenerative practices.

NFUSA awards grants to help recipients implement specific, defined project activities that align with NFUSA's charitable mission and provide measurable community benefit.

2. Grant Types and Award Amounts

NFUSA may offer one or more grant categories per cycle, including but not limited to:

- Mini Grants: typically \$2,500 - \$5,000 (5–10 awards per cycle, as available)
- Impact Grant: typically \$10,000 (1 award per cycle, as available)

NFUSA reserves the right to adjust funding amounts, number of awards, and award structure in any cycle.

3. Eligibility

Applicants must meet all eligibility requirements at the time of application.

Eligible applicants include:

- U.S.-based 501(c)(3) nonprofit organizations
- Public schools, universities, or government entities

- Community projects applying through an approved fiscal sponsor
- For-profit farms may be eligible only for projects that provide clear community benefit and are structured as restricted program support (see “Use of Funds” and “Documentation” sections)

Fiscal sponsor: If your project is not a registered nonprofit, you may apply with a fiscal sponsor, a 501(c)(3) organization that receives the grant funds and administers them for your project’s charitable activities. Many community foundations, nonprofits, schools, and faith-based organizations can serve this role.

For-profit eligibility note: NFUSA does not fund general business expenses. For-profit farms may apply when the proposed activities directly support charitable outcomes such as:

- Donation of fresh produce to a food pantry or nonprofit distributor
- Community education (workshops, volunteer programming, demonstrations)
- Public-facing food access initiatives aligned with NFUSA’s mission

Ineligible applicants include:

- Individuals or informal groups applying without a fiscal sponsor
- Projects primarily intended to expand private business profits without a defined charitable community benefit
- Political campaigns, candidates, or organizations primarily engaged in lobbying

4. Permitted Uses of Funds

Grant funds must be used only for the approved project as described in the application and in the final approved budget.

Typical permitted expenses include:

- Seeds, seedlings, soil amendments, compost, mulch
- Farm and garden supplies (row cover, irrigation components, hand tools, trellising)

- Educational materials, signage, and program supplies for workshops
- Small equipment purchases directly tied to project outcomes (subject to approval)
- Reasonable project-related services (e.g., soil delivery, printing, small repairs)
- Stipends for community workshops or youth programming only if explicitly approved in the budget

All expenses must be:

- Reasonable and necessary to carry out the approved project
- Documented (see Section 8)
- In compliance with applicable laws and regulations

For for-profit recipients, grant funds must be tied to charitable outcomes and may not be used for owner draws, personal expenses, debt repayment, or general farm operating costs unrelated to the approved project.

5. Prohibited Uses of Funds

Grant funds may not be used for:

- Alcohol, entertainment, or gifts (including gift cards)
- Personal expenses or personal debt
- Lobbying, political activity, or support for candidates/campaigns
- Capital construction projects (e.g., major building/structural work) unless explicitly approved
- Firearms, weapons, or controlled substances
- Expenses already funded by another restricted grant for the same purpose (duplicate funding)
- Expenses that primarily benefit an individual rather than the community
- Any purpose that would jeopardize NFUSA's 501(c)(3) status

If you are unsure whether an expense is allowable, contact NFUSA before making the purchase.

6. Award Process and Timeline

Application review: NFUSA will review applications and select recipients based on mission alignment, feasibility, community impact, and clarity of plan/budget.

Notification: Selected recipients will be notified by email.

Grant agreement required: Funding is not released until the recipient signs NFUSA's Grant Agreement and returns any required onboarding documents.

Typical timeline (may vary by cycle):

- Approval notification: within 6 weeks after application deadline
- Grant agreement + onboarding: due within 14 days of award notice
- Funding release: within 30 days after receiving all required documents

NFUSA may modify timelines at its discretion.

7. How Funds Are Disbursed

To keep the program simple while ensuring compliance, NFUSA uses a hybrid, documentation-based model:

Standard Disbursement Model

- 80% paid upfront after the Grant Agreement is signed and onboarding is complete
- 20% paid upon completion after NFUSA receives the required final documentation (Section 8)

Alternative Disbursement Models (NFUSA may apply case-by-case)

- Reimbursement model: Recipient purchases items first, then NFUSA reimburses with receipts and proof of completion

- Milestone model: Funds released in two or more tranches based on defined milestones

NFUSA will confirm the disbursement model in the award email and Grant Agreement.

8. Documentation and Reporting Requirements

Recipients must provide documentation sufficient to demonstrate that funds were used as intended and that the funded work took place.

Required Documentation (for all recipients)

1. Itemized budget confirmation (final approved budget)
2. Receipts or invoices for grant-funded purchases (digital copies are acceptable)
3. Photo documentation showing project implementation and outcomes
4. Short written updates, including:
 - A brief midpoint update (recommended)
 - A final summary report (required)

Social Media & Storytelling Requirements

Because storytelling is part of NFUSA's charitable purpose and program evaluation, recipients must:

- Provide at least 6–10 high-quality photos over the project period (or equivalent short video clips)
- Share at least [2–4] social posts or collaborate with NFUSA to publish content (posting can be done by the recipient or by NFUSA using submitted media, depending on recipient preference)
- Tag NFUSA and/or include an NFUSA hashtag where feasible

NFUSA understands not all recipients have strong social media capacity. In those cases, the requirement may be met through submitted photos, videos + short captions for NFUSA to publish.

Reporting Deadlines

Unless otherwise specified in the Grant Agreement:

- Final documentation is due within 60–120 days of initial disbursement (depending on project scope)
- Extensions may be granted upon written request before the deadline

Failure to submit documentation may affect future eligibility and/or trigger repayment requirements (Section 10).

9. Publicity, Media Release, and Use of Materials

Recipients agree that NFUSA may use submitted photos, videos, quotes, and project descriptions for:

- NFUSA website, newsletter, and impact reporting
- Social media and educational content
- Donor and grant reporting, including annual reports

Recipients are responsible for obtaining any necessary photo/video permissions from participants (especially minors) consistent with local policies and laws. NFUSA may provide a simple media release template upon award.

10. Compliance, Monitoring, and Repayment

NFUSA may request additional information to verify appropriate use of funds.

NFUSA reserves the right to:

- Withhold final payment (e.g., the remaining 20%) if documentation is incomplete

- Require repayment of funds used for prohibited or unapproved purposes
- Terminate the grant for material breach of the Grant Agreement

Examples of material breach include (not exhaustive):

- Misuse of funds
- Failure to complete the project without communication or approved extension
- Failure to provide required documentation
- Misrepresentation in the application

11. Non-Discrimination and Legal Compliance

Recipients must comply with all applicable federal, state, and local laws and regulations and must not discriminate based on race, color, religion, sex, gender identity, sexual orientation, age, disability, national origin, or any other protected status.

12. Tax and Payment Requirements

Before funds are disbursed, recipients may be required to provide:

- W-9 and/or organizational tax documentation
- Proof of nonprofit status (if applicable) or fiscal sponsorship documentation
- Payment details (ACH or check)

Recipients are responsible for their own tax reporting and financial compliance.

13. NFUSA Rights and Discretion

All awards are made at NFUSA's discretion. NFUSA reserves the right to:

- Reject any application
- Fund an application at a different amount than requested

- Request modifications to the budget or project scope
- Delay or cancel a grant cycle due to funding availability or program priorities