

Grow Local Support Fund

of The Southern Oklahoma Urban and Small Farm Hub

Funding opportunity in the Chickasaw Nation Treaty Territory - 2026

SOUTHERN OKLAHOMA URBAN SMALL FARM HUB



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1. Request For Proposals (RFP)

DEADLINE: February 13, 2026 (5 PM)

a. Summary

The Grow Local Support Fund is an initiative of the Southern Oklahoma Urban and Small Farm Hub, co-led by the Chickasaw Nation, the Oklahoma Conservation Commission, Murray State College, and the Oklahoma Association of Conservation Districts, with funding provided by the USDA Farm Service Agency (FSA) Urban and Innovative Agriculture Community-Based Organization Fund.

The Urban and Small Farm Hub team is pleased to announce the availability of financial assistance through the Grow Local Support Fund and invites proposals for projects that will strengthen urban agriculture **within the Chickasaw Nation Treaty Territory**. Awards will range from **\$500 to \$8,000**, with a **project period of no more than 12 months from date of approval to complete activities**.

The goal of the Grow Local Support Fund is to increase the production and availability of fresh, locally grown produce while expanding community knowledge of its benefits. Funding is available for a wide variety of project types, including small and urban farms, community gardening, infrastructure, education, and outreach efforts related to local food systems. **These funds are specifically intended to assist farms, organizations, and community-based groups that are already active in urban and small farm agriculture.**

b. Timeline

- Request for Proposals Opens— **January 5th, 2026**
- Virtual Meeting Q&A — **January 20th, 2026**
- Virtual Meeting Q & A — **February 4th, 2026**
- Proposal Deadline— **February 13th, 2026 (5 PM Central Time)**
- Proposals Reviewed by Project Team — **February 2026**
- Proposals Reviewed by USDA FSA — **March 2026**
- Awardees to be Notified — **April 1, 2026**
- Period of Performance — **April 1, 2026 – February 1, 2027**
- Deadline to submit final report, financial report, and project data – **March 1, 2027**

***Please note:** Once the RFP is closed and applications are received, the Project Team will go through the applications and ensure that they are complete as to the requirements set in the RFP. The applications will then be reviewed and rated by the Project Team, to include all partners and the advisory committee. All awards will be made on the merit of the proposed project. Selected proposals will then be reviewed by USDA FSA. All successful proposal applicants will need to fulfill funding requirements through the USDA FSA. The Urban and Small-Scale Food Hub located at the Murray State College Ardmore Campus will provide administrative assistance to fulfill legitimate payment requirements. **The timeline is dependent on the USDA review process.**

c. Southern Oklahoma Urban and Small Farm Hub

The Southern Oklahoma Urban and Small Farm Hub emerged from a national call from the USDA to understand, invest in, and support the needs of urban agricultural producers and helping urban producers access USDA programs and resources. Funding for this Initiative is provided through the USDA FSA Urban and Innovative Agriculture Community-Based Organization Fund. Through a Cooperative Agreement between the Chickasaw Nation, the Oklahoma Conservation Commission, Murray State College and the Oklahoma Association of Conservation Districts, the Urban and Small Farm Hub has four objectives:

- **Increase the availability of fresh, nutrient-dense foods, by supporting local production and connecting producers to local markets.**
- **Assist farmers with expanding farming operations and implementing regenerative practices in urban and small-scale agriculture areas.**
- **Increase knowledge, awareness, and participation in FSA, NRCS and state-led programs and services associated with local food production and related conservation.**
- **Increase understanding of urban and small-scale agriculture in the Chickasaw Nation Treaty Territory.**

d. Grow Local Support Fund

A fundamental component of the Southern Oklahoma Urban and Small Farm Hub is to support urban and small-scale producers in strengthening local food systems within the Chickasaw Nation Treaty Territory. This support includes providing financial assistance to urban and small farms, eligible non-profit organizations, community-based groups and tribal entities, to expand and improve their existing food production activities. Successful proposals should respond to a clear, identified need within the applicant's operation or community. All proposals must align with the goals of the Urban and Small Farm Hub and contribute to a more resilient, community-driven food system. Priority will be given to proposals from urban and small-scale producers, especially those focused on the following outcomes:

1. **Increasing producer capacity to grow food, expand operations, implement regenerative practices, and improve long-term sustainability.**
2. **Expanding access to fresh, healthy food within local communities.**
3. **Improving knowledge of the benefits of local food production and nutrient-dense foods.**
4. **Advancing current local food production efforts within the Chickasaw Nation treaty territory.**

e. Project Examples

The following are examples of projects that may be included (but are not limited to):

- Expanding or improving growing systems by installing raised beds, irrigation, rainwater catchment, or buying cover crop seed.
- Upgrading infrastructure such as seed starting supplies, equipment for bed prep, materials for wash pack stations or cold storage.
- Creating or enhancing community food gardens that are actively managed by a group or organization.
- Supporting farmers' market participation, including signage, materials or other equipment.
- Diversify farm offerings by building capacity for value-added products such as canned goods, herb or spice blends, etc.
- Producing educational materials related to the benefits of local food production.

2. Eligibility

The Grow Local Support Fund is intended for farms, organizations, and community-based groups who are already active in urban agriculture or small-scale farming through food production, access or education/outreach. **These are one-time funds for short-term urban agriculture-enhancing projects.**

a. Definitions

Project Area – Projects must take place within the Chickasaw Nation Treaty Territory. A map of the boundaries can be viewed at <https://www.chickasaw.net/our-nation/government/geographic-information.aspx>. Applications will only be accepted for projects located within the boundaries of the Chickasaw Nation Treaty Territory. Please note that while some counties are only partially included, only the portions of those counties within the Chickasaw Nation are eligible. Counties fully or partially included are Grady County, McClain County, Garvin County, Pontotoc County, Stephens County, Carter County, Murray County, Johnston County, Jefferson County, Love County, Marshall County, Bryan County, and Coal County.

Urban Agriculture – Urban agriculture includes the cultivation, processing, and distribution of food and agricultural products within urban, suburban, small town, and tribal communities. It encompasses a wide range of systems—including community gardens, rooftop farms, hydroponic, aeroponic, and aquaponic systems, and vertical farming. **Regardless of scale or setting**, any operation actively contributing to their local food system through growing or producing food is considered part of urban agriculture.

Small-Scale Farm –a farm with annual gross cash farm income (GCFI) under \$350,000.

b. Eligibility Checklist

- ✓ Urban/small-scale producer (for-profit or non-profit), non-profit organization, community-based organization, or tribal entity.
- ✓ Only one application can be submitted by an entity. Applications are allowed to include multiple sites of project activity.
- ✓ The applicant is currently active in urban/small-scale farming.
- ✓ The proposed work will enhance and build capacity for existing efforts and take place within the project area.
- ✓ The proposal clearly identifies a need related to food production, access, or community education.
- ✓ The project aligns with the goals of the Grow Local Support Fund and supports resilient, community-based food systems.
- ✓ The project will be completed within 11 months (April 1, 2026 – March 1, 2027).
- ✓ The budget does not include costs for the purchasing of land, livestock, vehicles or the repayment of loans.
- ✓ Project must not trigger the site-specific USDA Environmental review process (see page 9 for reviewing criteria).
- ✓ The awardee will be responsible for staying in contact with the project planner and fulfilling reporting and documentation requirements.
- ✓ If awarded, the applicant must submit a W-9 to the Urban and Small Farm Hub staff before payment can be issued.

Late and incomplete submissions will not be accepted.

3. Award

a. Funding

- Funding will be allocated for a **project period of up to 11 months**, beginning **April 1, 2026**, and ending **March 1, 2027**.
- Awards will range from **\$500 to \$8,000**.
- Funding will be distributed through a funding agreement with a local Conservation District, assisted by the Urban and Small Farm Hub.

b. Funding Restrictions

Funds may only be used for activities directly related to the approved project. They may not be used for:

- Purchasing land
- Purchasing livestock
- Vehicles
- Repaying loans
- Personal expenses
- Costs incurred before grant approval

c. Deliverables

- The Project Team will conduct scheduled site visits to engage with awardees, support implementation, and verify project progress and completion.
- Awardees must submit before and after pictures
- W9
- Receipts for all approved project purposes
- All awardees must obtain a USDA Farm Number by the end of the project period, unless one is already established.
- Awardees must sign a funding agreement outlining deliverables and payment terms
- Signed cooperator agreement with local conservation district
- Signed consent form for land leases from landowner, if applicable

d. Notification of Awards

Award notifications will be sent by email from the Urban and Small Farm Hub to selected applicants by **April 1, 2026**.

All proposals will be reviewed by the Urban and Small-Scale Agriculture Hub Project Team and Advisory Committee, and those recommended for funding will then undergo a USDA review process. Final selections will be based on project merit, alignment with program goals, and readiness to implement.

The timeline for award disbursement is dependent on review from TIME (To Improve Mississippi Economics) and the USDA.

e. What Awardees Receive

- Project award amount between \$500 and \$8,000
- **A conservation plan** developed by the assigned technician in partnership with their local conservation district and the Urban and Small-Scale Agriculture Hub.
- **A membership to the Urban and Small Farm Hub**, which includes access to technical support, educational resources, and networking opportunities.
- Assistance in obtaining a **USDA farm number**
- The opportunity to **attend producer workshops** hosted by the Urban and Small-Scale Agriculture Hub.

These resources are designed to support awardees beyond funding—helping build long-term resilience, knowledge, and connection within the local food system.

4. Review Process

Each application will first be screened to ensure it meets the basic eligibility and administrative requirements outlined in this RFP and ensure that the proposal does not trigger the site-specific USDA environmental review process. Applications that meet those requirements will be evaluated by a review panel made up of members from the Urban and Small Farm Hub Technical Working Group, project partners, and staff.

a. Reviewer Criteria

Applications will be scored based on the quality and completeness of the responses provided in the proposal's narrative. Reviewers will use the following criteria:

- **Target Locality:** Chickasaw Nation Treaty Territory
- **Project Approach:** The steps to complete the project are clearly described, realistic, and achievable within the 12-month timeframe
- **Community Benefit:** The applicant describes who will benefit from the project and how food will be shared or distributed.
- **Connection to Existing Work:** The applicant shows how the project builds on their current operation and enhances what they're already doing.
- **Future Impact:** The applicant reflects on how the project will make a difference now and in the long term.
- **Budget Justification:** The requested budget is reasonable and well aligned with project goals.
- **Project Relevance and Alignment** – The project clearly advances the goal of the Grow Local Support Fund by increasing the production and availability of fresh, locally grown food and/or expanding community knowledge of its benefits.
- **Readiness to Implement** – The applicant demonstrates the capacity and preparedness to begin and complete the project within the 12-month timeframe, including having the necessary resources, partnerships, or plans already in place.

**Each category will be evaluated using the following scoring:
1= lowest, 5=highest (Total points possible =55)**

Exceeds: The applicant provides specific and comprehensive information, and provides complete, detailed, and clearly articulated responses to address the questions. The description is well conceived, and the ideas are fully developed. (4-5)

Meets Expectations: The applicant provides general but sufficient detail, adequately addresses the criteria questions, however some areas are not fully explained and/or questions remain. The application has some minor inconsistencies and weaknesses. (2-3)

Does Not Meet Expectations: The applicant omitted a very large portion of the requested information, fails to provide information, provides inaccurate information, or provides information that is hard to understand. (1-2)

b. USDA Environmental Review Process

Proposals that are selected to be recommended for an award by the Project Team will submit proposal materials to the USDA for a required review process. This includes:

USDA Farm Service Agency (FSA) will comply with the National Environmental Policy Act (NEPA), and the implementing regulations in 40 CFR Parts 1500 – 1508, and FSA’s NEPA implementing Regulations in 7 CFR Part 799 for cooperative agreements entered under the FSA Urban and Innovative Agriculture Community-Based Organization Fund. After review at the programmatic level, USDA determined that, in general, cooperative agreements entered under Section 1001 of the Build Back Better Act, Food Systems Transformation Effort do not have the potential for significant impacts to the human environment. FSA has determined that the following categories of activities are categorically excluded from further review under the National Environmental Policy Act, per 7 CFR § 799.31:

- Educational or informational (i.e., outreach) activities; and
- Procurement actions for goods and services conducted in accordance with Executive Orders.

However, a site-specific review will be needed for activities funded through the cooperative agreement, or subsequent micro-grant programs, if any of the following conditions are true:

1. **Disturb ground to a level that has not been previously disturbed, remove any trees, remove any tree roots, or use mechanical means to remove damaged fencing or debris that will impact below the level of previous disturbance.**
2. **Place a farm storage or other facility on a farm eligible for or listed on the National Register of Historic Places and would have a visual impact to the historic character of the farm.**
3. **Modify, renovate, or remove a structure or building that is 50 years old or older.**
4. **Involve an activity including new land clearing, impacts to any water body, wetland, floodplain, riparian buffer, threatened or endangered species, their critical habitat, or cultural resources that would otherwise require consultation.**
5. **Result in any extraordinary circumstances in accordance with Handbook 1-EQ (Rev. 3) Par. 25.**
6. **Change the existing land use or remove the land from agricultural use.**
7. **Involve FSA actions or programs not specified in this P-850, not approved in that municipality, or for which an individual site-specific FSA-850 or environmental assessment is required.**

For micro-grants, the grantee must satisfy any site-specific NEPA requirements identified by FSA prior to drawing down funds or incurring expenses related to the micro-grant. Once these conditions have been successfully completed, FSA will notify the grantee that the review is complete. At that time, the distribution and expenditure of micro-grant funds will be authorized. Before the NEPA process is completed, Federal regulations specify acceptable actions in 40 CFR § 1506.1.

5. How to Apply?

a. Application Requirement

- Applicants should submit the completed proposal by email to sofarmhub@mscok.edu no later than

5 PM on February 13th, 2026. Or postmarked by February 13th, and mailed to:

MSC-Ardmore Campus
2901 Mt Washington Rd, Ardmore,
OK 73401 Suite 158

- **Each proposal must contain the following:**
 - **Proposal Cover Sheet (template provided)**
 - **Proposal Narrative (template provided)**
 - **Proposal Budget (template provided)**
 - **1 Reference (template provided)**
 - **Letter(s) of support from other organization(s) that have agreed to collaborate on the project (if applicable).**
- For accessibility and language assistance, please contact sofarmhub@mscok.edu

Late and incomplete submissions will not be accepted.

b. Address questions about this Request for Proposals to: sofarmhub@mscok.edu