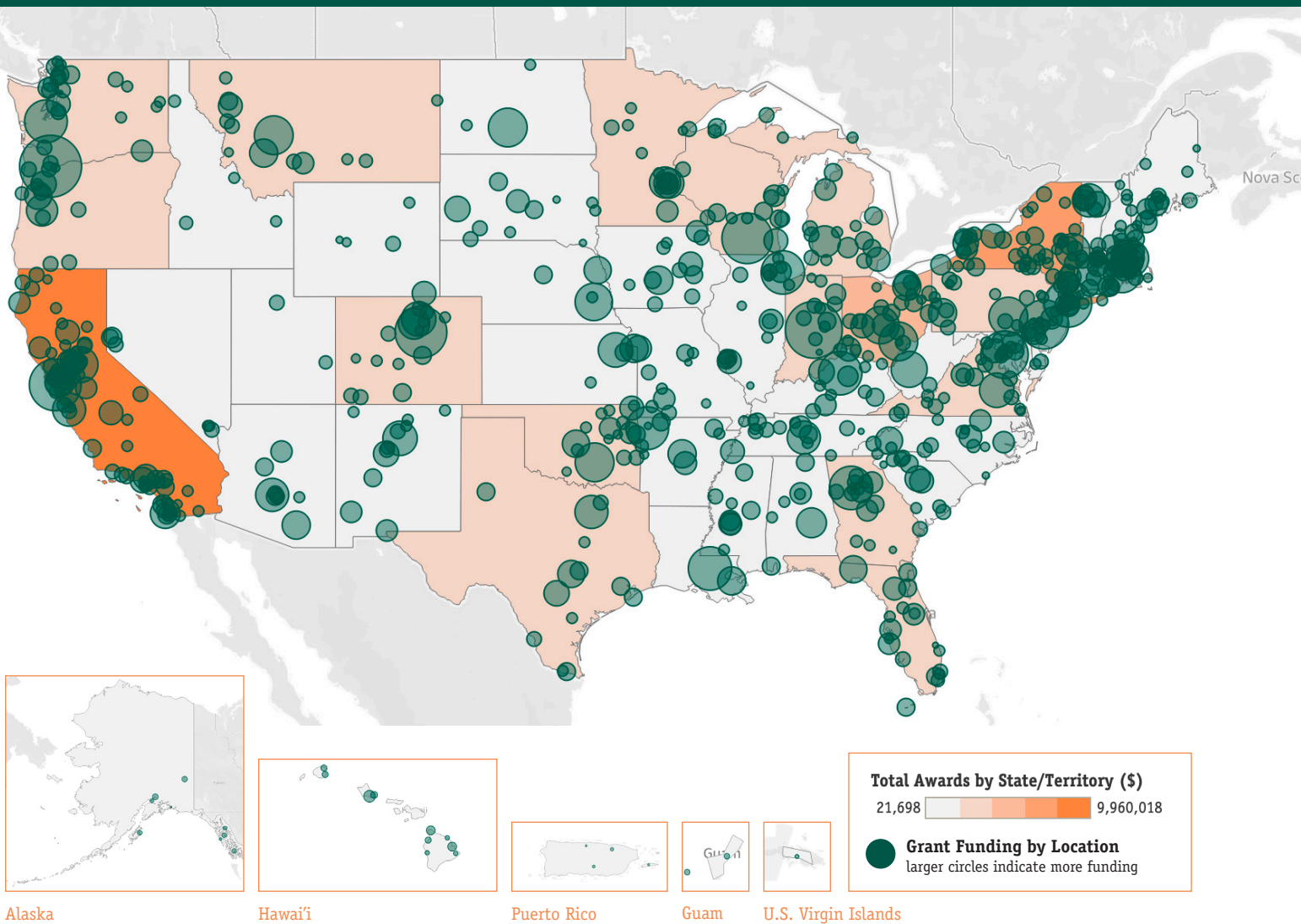


\$100 Million for Farm to School: The Patrick Leahy Farm to School Grant's National Reach Since 2013



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Introduction

This resource highlights the impact of the United States Department of Agriculture (USDA) Patrick Leahy Farm to School Grant Program, celebrating over a decade of implementation. Since 2013, the program has awarded \$100 million for a total of 1,275 projects. This analysis takes a broad view of the awards over time and describes how much was awarded, as well as awards by grantee type, project type, and location.

National Farm to School Network (NFSN) advocates to policymakers as the national voice of the farm to school movement. Since calling for the creation of a permanent federal farm to school grant program, NFSN has worked with farm to school and farm to early care and education (ECE) supporters to urge policymakers to expand and improve this program. We also advocate for integration of farm to school and farm to ECE support into other funding streams and policies, so that more communities have the resources to sustain and build their programs.

The Patrick Leahy grants seed farm to school activities, enabling communities to launch new initiatives, strengthen existing partnerships, and cultivate sustainable food systems. Each dollar invested creates opportunities for schools and ECEs to connect children with healthy, local foods while supporting farmers, ranchers, and food producers. Over time, these initial investments sprout into long-term benefits—building resilient local economies, instilling lifelong eating habits in children, and nurturing a culture of local food support that continues to grow long after the grant period ends.

Dive Deeper and Create Your Own Visualizations Using NFSN's Farm to School Grant Dashboard and Searchable Project Database

Filter by location, project type, grantee type, year, and more. [Click here](#) to check it out.



For More Information



Visit USDA's Farm to School Grant Program [Webpage](#)



Read [USDA's recent evaluation](#) of 2018-2019 cycle grants

The Patrick Leahy Farm to School Grant Program is an annual competitive federal grant program administered by USDA. The program assists grantees in the planning, development, and implementation of farm to school programs with the goal of connecting students to their food sources through nutrition education, school gardens, and local food procurement.⁶ Eligible applicants include organizations that participate in the Child Nutrition Programs, Indian Tribal organizations, producers, State departments, and nonprofit organizations. Applicants are required to provide at least 25% non-federal matching resources. This match can be, but is not limited to, cash, volunteer hours, equipment, or classroom space.

This grant was established as a permanent program through the Healthy, Hunger-Free Kids Act of 2010.² This legislation was the most recent update for Child Nutrition Reauthorization, which allows USDA to carry out federal child nutrition programs including the National School Lunch Program, the School Breakfast Program, and the Child and Adult Care Food Program, among others. The grant is supported by the larger Patrick Leahy USDA Farm to School Program that includes technical assistance, resource development, training, and research. In late 2022, the USDA program and grant were renamed after Senator Patrick Leahy to recognize the retiring Senator's leadership as a champion of the program.

Methodology

Award data released annually from USDA were compiled into a dataset. Categories provided by USDA include year, location, state or territory, grant type, grant amount, and project description. The following categories were added to conduct further analysis:

Region:

To analyze the distribution of Farm to School Grants across the United States and its territories, projects were grouped into their respective USDA Food and Nutrition Service regional divisions.⁸ States or territories outside the continental United States were assigned to their own grouping in order to better reflect the realities of insular or outlying geographies.

Grantee Type:

Grantees were categorized into five groups: schools, local governments, Tribal or State governments, producers, and nonprofit organizations.

Note: Producers with nonprofit status were coded as nonprofit organizations instead of producers.

Grant Type:

Project types have changed over the grant's implementation. In total, 18 different types of projects were condensed into seven categories for further analysis. See more details on page 11 about the changes over time.

Native Community Projects:

The authors coded awardees as a Native community project by identifying Tribal governments or schools, Indigenous-led or serving non-profit organizations, and whether project descriptions have an explicit intended benefit to a Native community.

Rural Status:

This analysis observes the rural classification of school sites by searching their location in the National Education Statistics Locale Lookup tool.³ These designations have been used since at least the FY 2019 grant cycle. School-led projects with multiple districts were classified based on the locale of a majority of sites.

Limitations

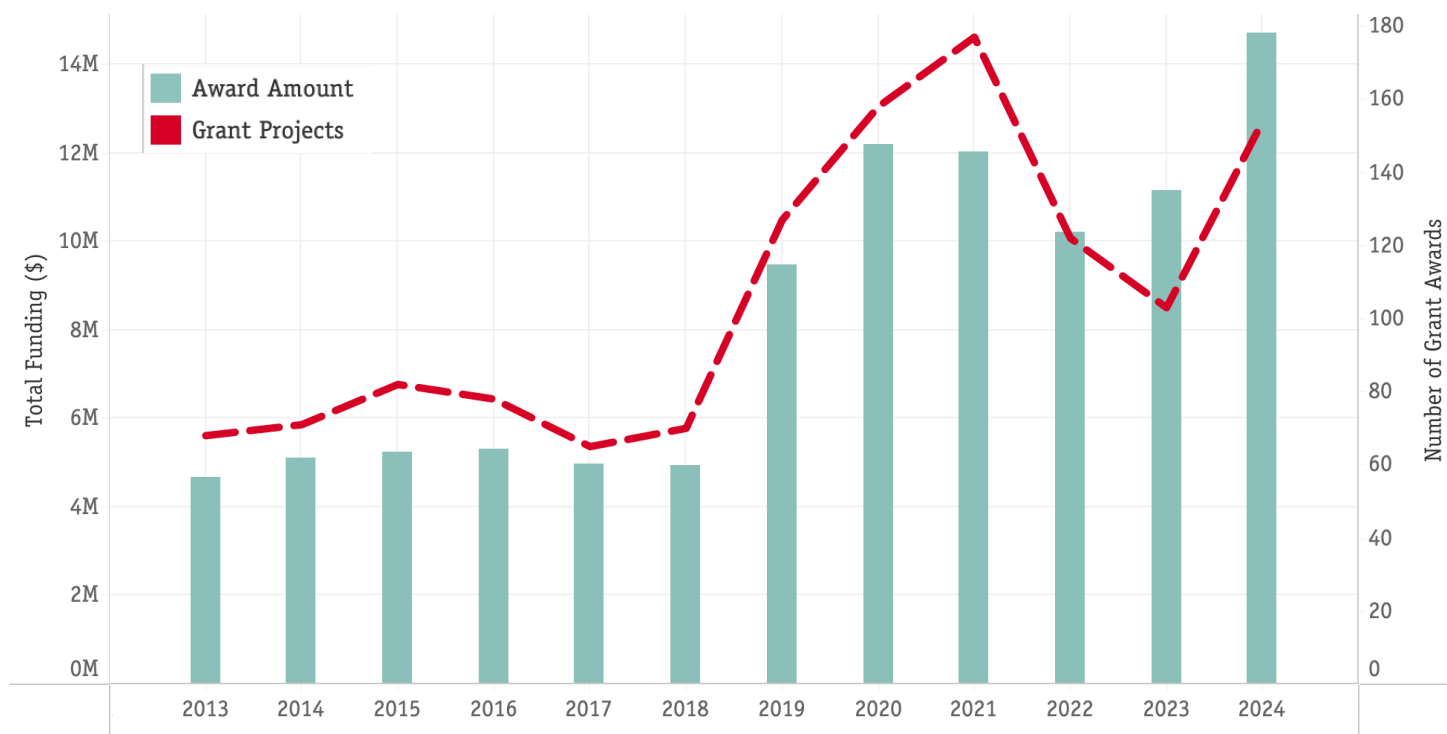
Geographic Reach:

Grants provided to organizations in one state may have an impact in other states or nationally. For example, grants provided to NFSN are coded as California grants, despite our organization's national reach.

Executive Summaries:

This analysis only used executive summaries provided by USDA. Therefore analysis on the content of the projects is limited. Future research may be able to glean more information about each project for an in-depth analysis of activities undertaken during the grant period.

Figure 1. Grant Awards Over Time



The USDA Patrick Leahy Farm to School Grant Program has grown considerably over time.

Between 2013 and 2024, the program awarded \$100 million to a total of 1,275 recipients. The Healthy, Hunger-Free Kids Act allocates \$5 million to the Farm to School program each year and also allows Congress to allocate additional discretionary funding to the program yearly. On average, total allocations have increased 13.8% each year since the program's establishment in 2013. In its first grant cycle, the program awarded \$4.7 million for 68 projects. In the 2024 grant cycle, the program awarded \$14.7 million for 154 projects. The largest jump in the program's budget occurred after 2018. From 2018-2024, the grant program awarded more than \$9 million annually, well above the initial \$5 million baseline appropriation. This is because of successful advocacy efforts to increase discretionary appropriations to the USDA Farm to School program.

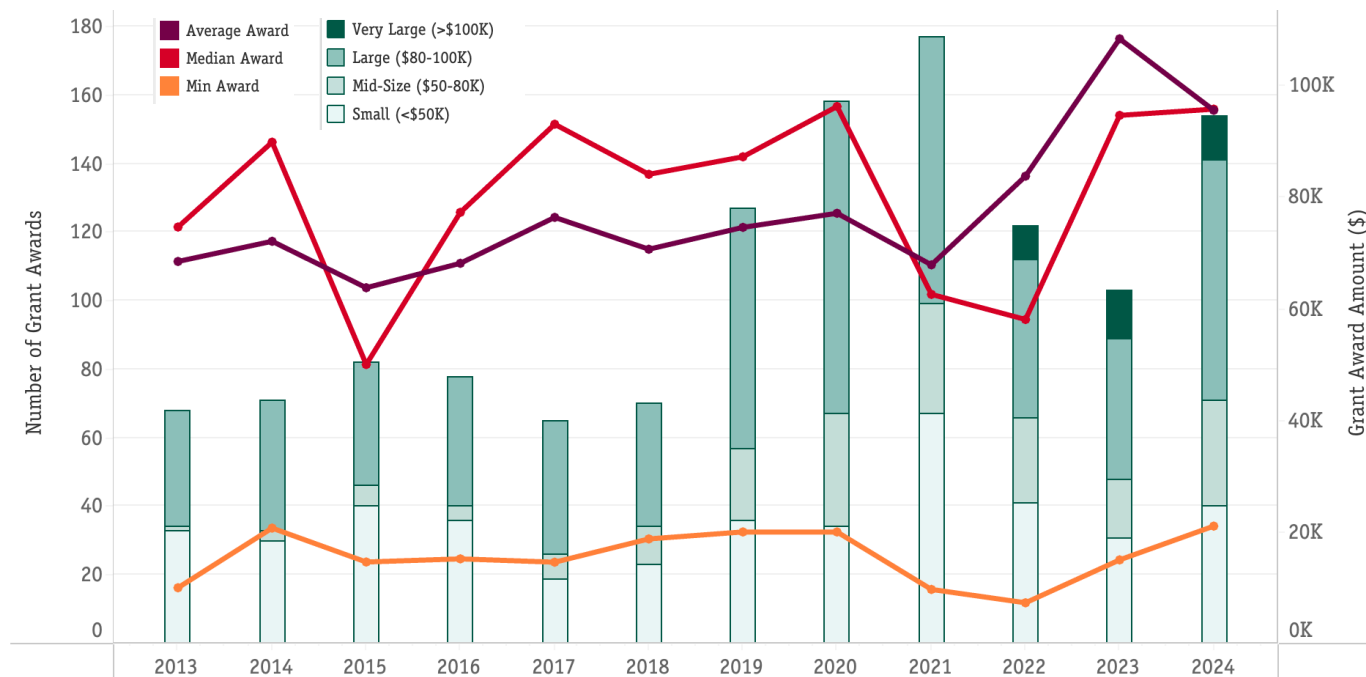
The number of awards also ranged considerably over the last decade. The highest number of awards in one year was in 2021 when 177 projects were awarded. This is a 160% increase from the first year of implementation in 2013 when only 68 projects were funded. The average number of awards per year between 2013 and 2024 was 106 with an average annual allocation of \$8.3 million. Figure 1 shows the number of awards and the overall program budget over time.

From 2013-2024:

\$100
Million Awarded

1,275
Projects Funded

Figure 2. Grant Award Size Over Time



The proportion of grant awards by size has remained steady.

Projects can be funded up to two years and award caps vary depending on the type of grantee and type of project. Generally, project periods have been 1-2 years in length depending on the grant type, but in FY24 all projects have a blanket two-year period. Turnkey grants have no minimum but have a maximum of \$50,000. Implementation grants can be as high as \$100,000 or \$500,000, depending on the awarded entity. For example, State and Tribal governments and their nonprofit partners are eligible for implementation awards exceeding \$100,000 so long as they have interstate or inter-Tribal scope. The grant cap increased from \$100,000 to \$500,000 in 2022 due to grassroots advocacy efforts. This recent change has increased the average award size, though it has little impact on the median award. The pop-out box on the right shows the award ranges by each grant type for FY 2024.⁶

The median award amount provided to grantees each year varied over time, from a low of \$50,000 in 2015 to a high of \$96,239 in 2020. The average award size for a single year followed this trend, and over time ranged from a low of \$63,759 in 2015 to a high of \$108,368 in 2023. The largest single awards were each for \$500,000, awarded to the First Nations Development Institute (2023), the Chickasaw Nation (2024), and the North Dakota Department of Agriculture (2024).

Overall, the percentage of grants in the small (<\$50,000), mid-size (\$50,000-79,999), large (\$80,000-\$100,000) categories remained steady over time, with less than 15 “very large” grants (>\$100,000) awarded annually from 2022-2024. Figure 2 illustrates the minimum, maximum, and median award amounts and grant sizes awarded by fiscal year from 2013 to 2024.

Grant Type Award Range (2024 Cycle)

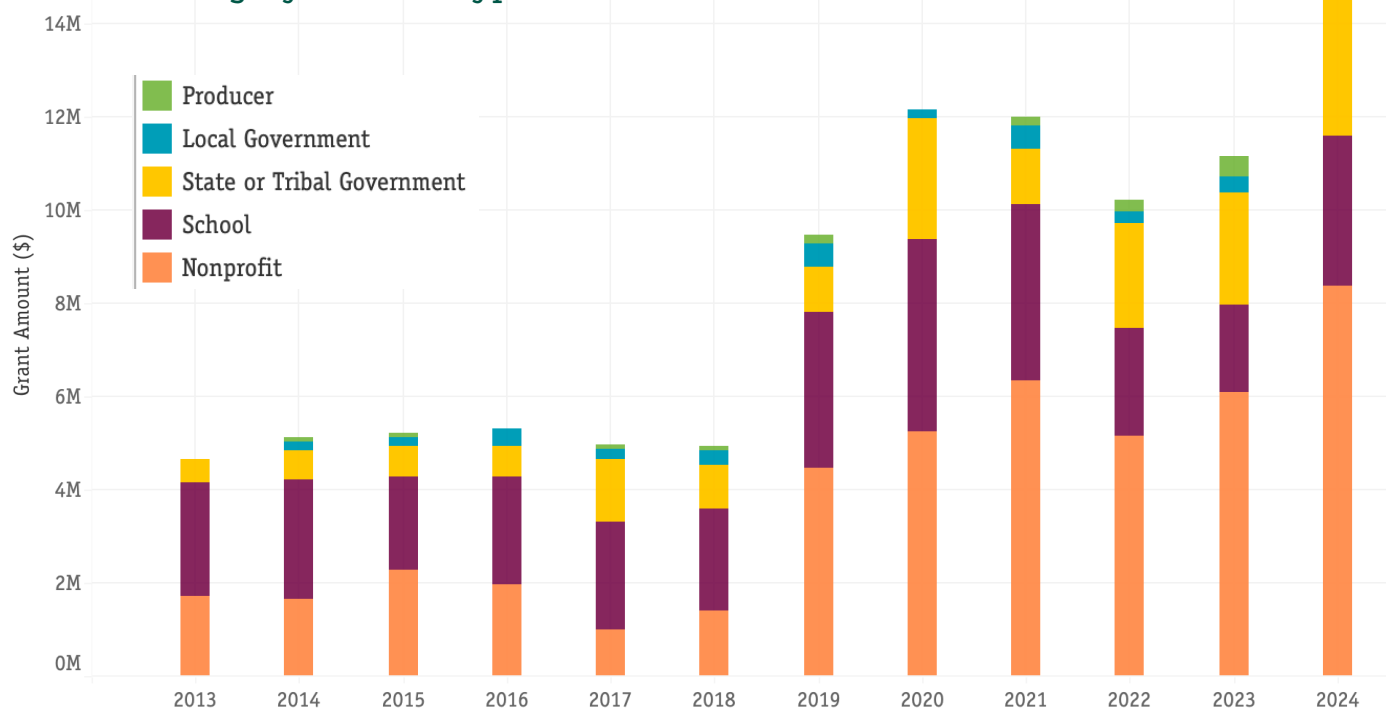
Turnkey:
Planning, Edible
Garden, and
Agricultural Education
Up to \$50,000

Implementation:
\$50,000 - \$100,000
OR
\$100,001 - \$500,000

**State, Territory,
or Tribal
Government:**
\$50,000 - \$500,000

Learn more about grant
types on pages 11-12.

Figure 3. Funding By Grantee Type Over Time



Nonprofit organizations and schools, respectively, received the most grant awards and funding.

Combined, these groups received more than 80% of total awards (44% and 38% respectively), with less than 20% of awards going toward governments and producers. Since 2021, nonprofit organizations have received an even larger proportion of funding in each grant cycle. The total number of grants and total funding by grantee type from 2013-2024 are similar and are shown in Figure 4. Figure 3 illustrates the funding allocated to these different types of grantees over time. The average award size was highest for State and Tribal governments and smallest for school grantees.

Figure 4. Grant Awards By Grantee Type

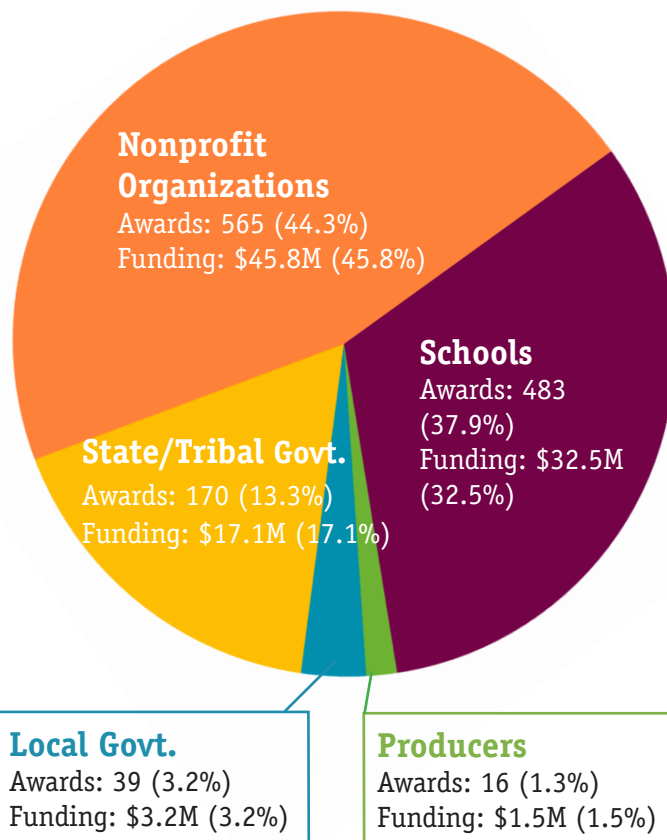


Table 1. Award Size By Grantee Type

Grantee Type	Average	Range
Producer	\$93,711	\$15-389K
Local Govt.	\$76,848	\$16.5-100K
State/Tribal Govt.	\$100,410	\$10.3-500K
School	\$67,222	\$9.7-100K
Nonprofit	\$81,062	\$7.3-500K

Figure 5. Native Community Projects Over Time

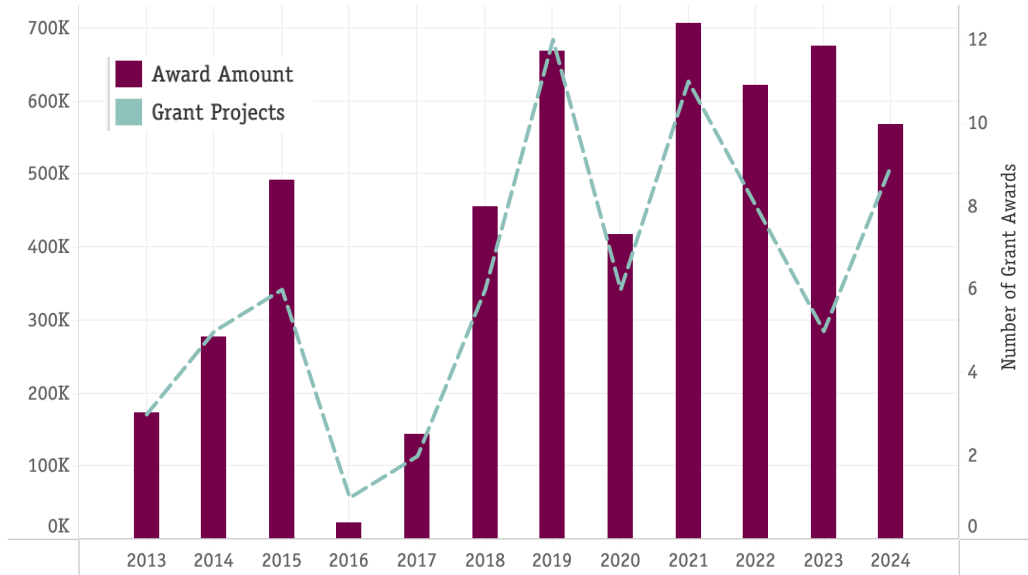


Table 2. Native Community Project Award Sizes

Project Beneficiary	Average	Range	Total	Total Awards
Native Communities	\$70,559	\$7.3-500K	\$5.2M	74
Non-Native Communities	\$78,906	\$9.7-500K	\$94.8M	1,201

From 2013-2024, roughly one in every twenty projects (5.8%) supported Native communities, totaling \$5.2 million (5.2%) since 2013. Native community projects were present in 22 states as well as Guam.

Table 3. Native Community Projects By State or Territory

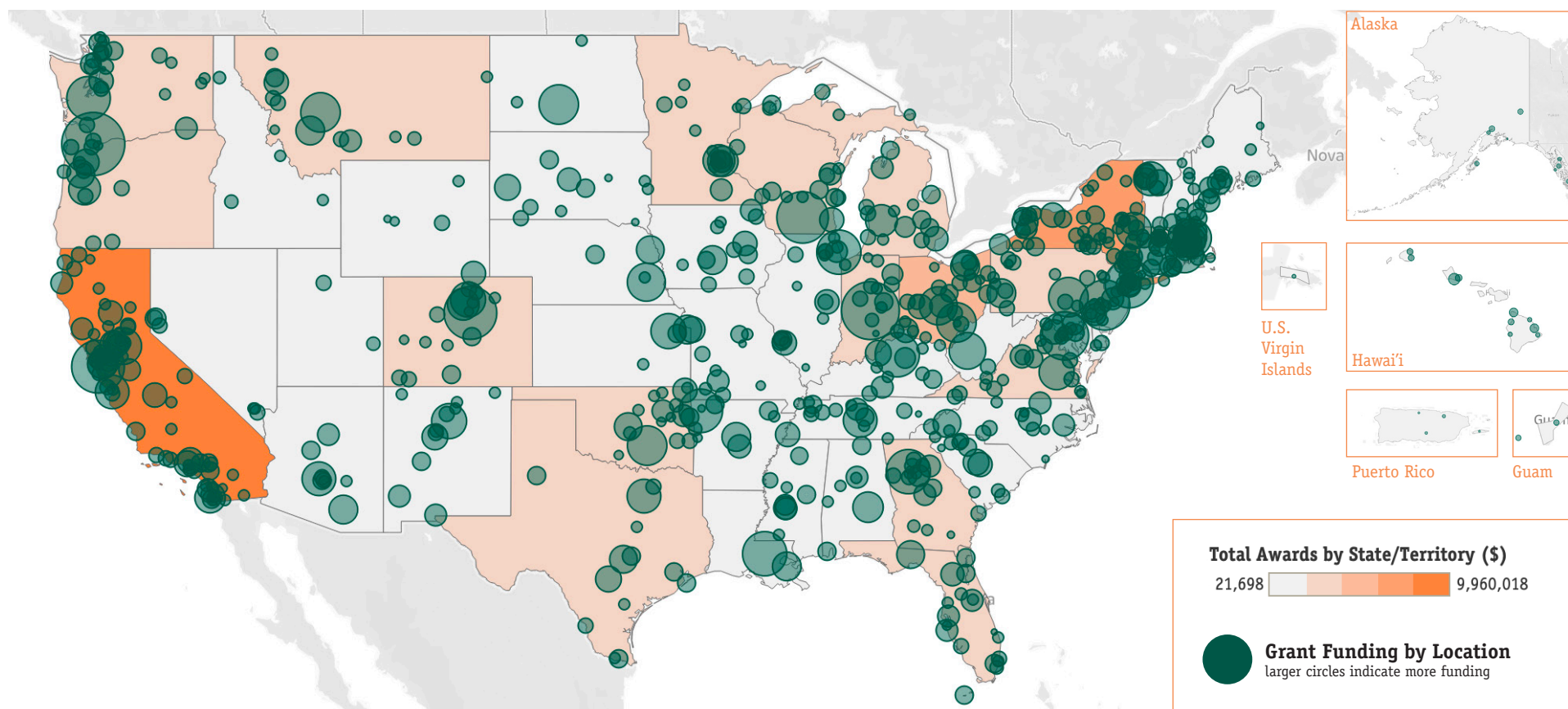
State	#	\$(K)
AK	4	291.5
AZ	3	181.3
CA	6	495.7
CO	2	550.0
GU	1	100.0
HI	4	295.2
IN	5	424.2
IA	1	100.0
MI	1	100.0
MN	1	32.8
MS	2	144.3
MT	1	50.0
NM	7	393.4
NY	3	143.8
NC	1	99.0
ND	1	43.5
OK	12	651.6
OR	1	28.8
SD	10	700.4
VA	1	43.4
WA	3	96.4
WI	3	232.6
WY	1	23.6

The Healthy, Hunger-Free Kids Act of 2010 mandates that the USDA prioritize geographic diversity and equitable distribution among tribal, rural, and urban communities. By explicitly including Native community projects, USDA is taking a necessary step toward building a more just food system—one that addresses the historical discrimination federal policies have imposed on Native American communities.

The average award size for Native community projects was \$70,559 per project, about \$8,350 less than the average funding that went to all other projects, as demonstrated in Table 2. While Native American communities and people span the entire nation and represent 2.9% of residents,⁴ projects that benefit these communities received more than 5% of grants and annual funding in all but three years of program implementation and more than 10% of annual funding since 2021. Still, less than half of states (22 states and Guam) were provided a grant that supported Native communities. As shown in Table 3 above, Oklahoma, Colorado, California, Indiana, and New Mexico were among the most funded states accounting for 47% of total Native community projects. Oklahoma received the most funding with 41% of projects and 27% of all funding awarded — including \$500,000 to The Chickasaw Nation — were intended to benefit Native communities.

WHERE?

Figure 6. Map of Awarded Projects



The program is achieving its goal of geographic diversity; all 50 states, eligible territories, and the District of Columbia have received at least one grant since 2013.

Figure 6 is a map of all grantees over time. The green dots represent the physical location of grantees, and the size of the dots represents the aggregated award size for each municipality. In general, large project clusters occur on the East and West Coasts. The color of the states represents the total award by state, with a deeper shade of orange symbolizing a greater award total. This map is also available on [NFSN's interactive dashboard](#), where award locations, grant sizes, and project summaries, can be explored in greater depth.

Table 4. Awards by Region

Region	Average Award	Total Funding	% Funding	# Awards	% Awards	% Population, 2020
Mid-Atlantic	\$76,364	\$9.32M	9.3%	122	9.6%	12.1%
Midwest	\$83,033	\$17.35M	17.4%	209	16.4%	16.8%
Mountain Plains	\$80,683	\$11.70M	11.7%	145	11.4%	6.0%
Northeast	\$77,195	\$16.83M	16.8%	218	17.1%	10.5%
Outside COTUS	\$68,449	\$2.94M	2.9%	43	3.4%	1.7%
Southeast	\$72,584	\$13.43M	13.4%	185	14.5%	20.1%
Southwest	\$76,381	\$11.01M	11.1%	145	11.4%	15.9%
Western	\$83,383	\$17.34M	17.3%	208	16.3%	16.8%

Table 4 shows the complete funding and number of projects per region. The Midwest and Western regions received the highest amount of funding, each receiving over \$17.3 million, supporting 208 projects, and accounting for more than 17% of all funding. States and territories outside the Contiguous US (COTUS) received the smallest average award amount and the lowest amount of funding at \$2.9 million, representing only 2.9% of funding, totaling 43 projects.

However, when we look at the proportion of funding awarded compared to residents in each region,⁴ the Midwest, Western, and Outside the COTUS regions received relatively proportional funding (within 1.5 percentage points). Areas outside COTUS have steadily received more funding since 2019, which marked the first time the region received more than \$200,000 in funding. That figure has been rising and in 2024 the Outside COTUS region received \$495,600 in awards. The Northeast and Mountain Plains received more funding than their 2020 population proportion. Regions that received less funding in proportion to their population were the Southeast, Southwest, and the Mid-Atlantic. The proportion of grant awards closely mirrors the proportion of grant funding, though the Outside COTUS region received a larger proportion of grant awards compared to its population (3.4% awards vs. 1.7% pop).

In general, states received support that is proportionate to their population size.

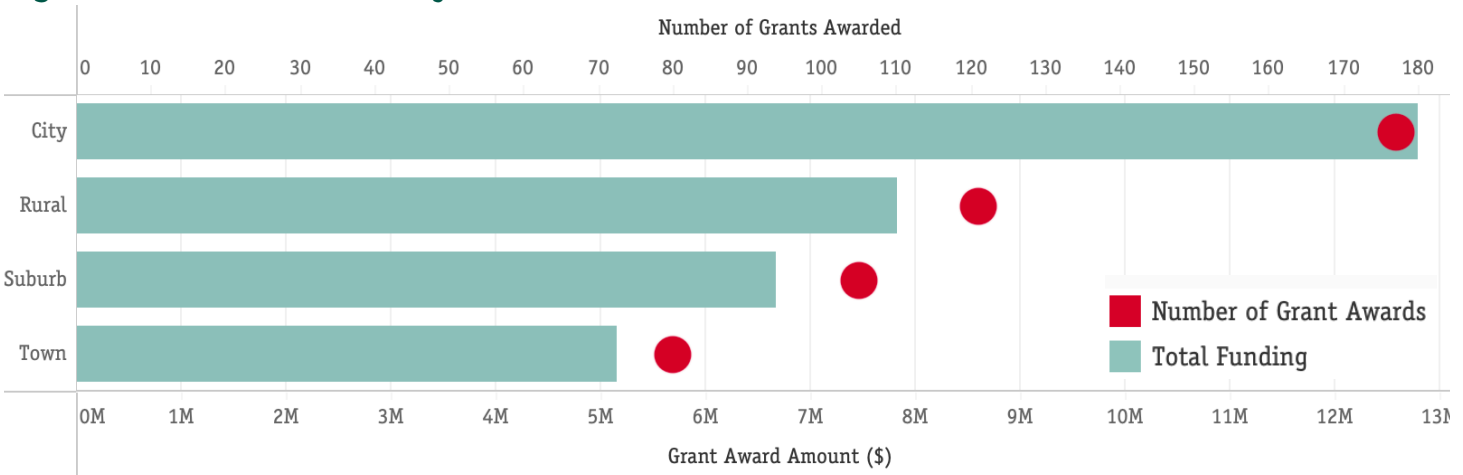
The top four most funded states received nearly a quarter of all grant funding, with California receiving 10% of all funding. However, the awards provided to California are less than the state's proportion of US residents in 2020 (11.8%). In general, states received funding within 1.5 percentage points of their population proportion with several exceptions. Florida, California, Illinois, and New Jersey all received less, with Florida receiving the most drastic difference: 2.3% of funding despite having 6.4% of the population. Three states (Oregon, Montana, and Massachusetts) received relatively more funding compared to population proportion, with the highest being Oregon (3.6% of grant funding vs. 1.3% of population). The total number of projects awarded by state or territory range from 1 (U.S. Virgin Islands) to 121 (California). The proportion of the number of projects awarded closely mirrors the proportion of funding received. Average award sizes vary by state or territory, ranging from \$21,698 (U.S. Virgin Islands) to \$130,500 (North Dakota), but these variations likely vary based on the types of projects funded in each state and the small sample size for most states.

Note: American Samoa and the Commonwealth of the Northern Marina Islands have not been eligible for this program because they receive federal block grants and do not participate in the Child Nutrition Programs.

Urban schools received nearly 40% of school funding and higher award sizes on average. Schools in towns, rural communities, and cities are well represented, and suburban schools are under-represented compared to public student enrollment data.

Per the mandate of the Healthy, Hunger-Free Kids Act (2010), the Patrick Leahy Farm to School grant program prioritizes geographic equity with a priority for rural communities. For that reason, examining locale was relevant to this project. Where kids grow up impacts their future. According to Clark et al. (2022), poverty is higher in rural schools, which leads to fewer educational and economic opportunities into adulthood along with poorer health compared to suburban and urban areas. Investment in rural kids, communities, and producers is one way USDA is addressing these disparities.

Figure 7. School Awards by Locale



Only schools were analyzed based on their locale due to the complex nature of analyzing the geographic reach of grantees, particularly state agencies and nonprofit organizations. This analysis observes the rural classification of school sites by searching their location in the National Center for Education Statistics Locale Lookup tool.³ Projects spanning multiple districts were classified based on the locale of a majority of sites. Schools were designated as “city,” “suburb,” “town,” and “rural.”

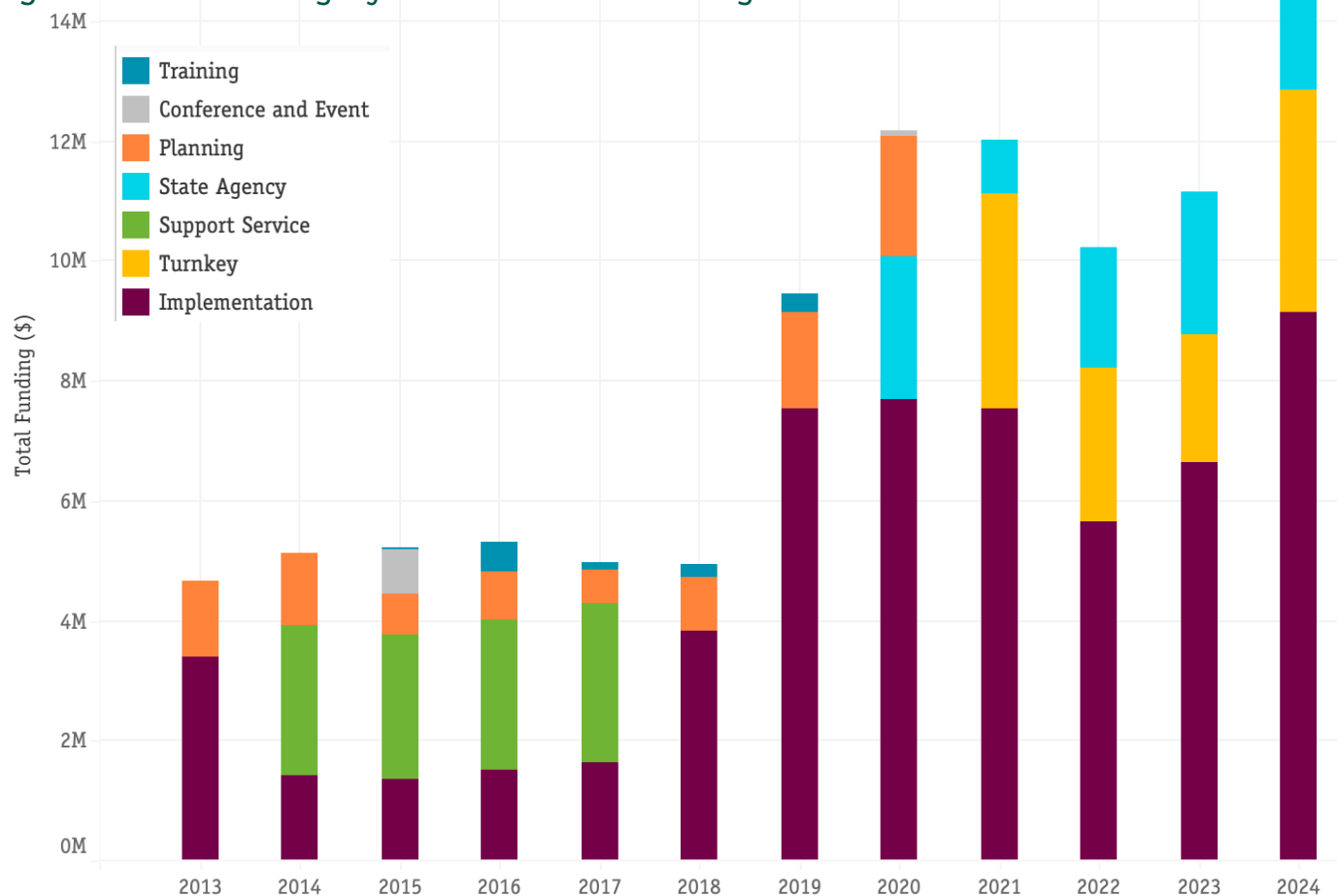
Schools were awarded 38% of projects and received a third (32.5%) of total funding. The average award amount was slightly higher for schools in cities compared to other localities (\$72,290 vs. <\$65,000). As shown in Table 5, schools in rural areas, towns, and cities received a greater proportion of grant awards and award sizes than their student population proportion. Suburban schools received disproportionately less grant support - a difference of nearly 20 percentage points - compared to its student population.

Table 5. School Awards by Locale

Locale	Average Award	Award Range	Total Funding	% Funding	# Awards	% Awards	% US Public K-12 Student Pop.
Rural	\$64,778	\$21.6-100K	\$7.84 M	24.1%	121	25.1%	20.3%
Town	\$64,434	\$23.4-100K	\$5.15 M	15.9%	80	16.6%	10.8%
Suburb	\$63,621	\$20.7-100K	\$6.68 M	20.5%	105	21.7%	38.9%
City	\$72,290	\$9.7-100K	\$12.8 M	39.4%	177	36.6%	29.7%

**Data for Fall 2022, Percentages do not total 100% because some locales are unknown*

Figure 8. Grant Category Variation and Funding and Over Time



The types of eligible projects have expanded and evolved since the program began.

- In 2013 projects fell into one of two categories – Implementation or Planning grants. **Implementation grants** are intended for grantees to continue to scale and develop existing farm to school programs, whereas **Planning grants** enable grantees to strategically design and set up their farm to school initiatives, drawing on proven best practices to ensure a successful program launch.
- From 2014-2020, **Support Service** (intended for entities that support schools in farm to school activities), **Conference and Events** (intended for hosting farm to school conferences and events), and **Training** grants were established in addition to Implementation and Planning grants. **State Agency** grants (intended for state agencies to support and grow farm to school efforts in their states) were established starting in 2020.
- Since 2021, eligible projects now fall under three broad award types – Implementation, State Agency, and **Turnkey** grants (see next page for details). Furthermore, there are currently three subcategories of Turnkey grants – Action Planning, Edible Gardens, and Agricultural Education.

Implementation projects have received the majority of total funding, accounting for more than half (57%) of the total funding across 566 projects. This is likely due to the higher cost of implementing programs compared with other project scopes like planning or training. This project also has the greatest longevity and has been eligible since the inception of the grant program. See Figure 8 for the number and distribution of grant types since 2013.

Since 2021, over 60% of funding - representing \$29 million - has been awarded for Implementation Grants, with a quarter of funding going toward Turnkey grants.

Figure 9 shows the awards by grant type from 2021-2024. While State Agency grants received the lowest amount of funding from 2021-2024 (15%), these grants had the highest average award amount compared to Implementation and Turnkey grants (\$178,000 vs. \$112,000 vs. \$47,000 respectively).

Turnkey Grants:

Turnkey grants support both the creation of new farm to school programs and the growth of existing ones. They are designed to make the application process easier by including ready-made activities tailored to popular farm to school projects. The establishment of this grant type is in response to stakeholder feedback that assembling project scopes from scratch was a barrier for participation. This design has a significant potential to foster program growth in communities new to farm to school.

Figure 10 shows the various types of Turnkey grant funding starting in 2022, which marks when the three types (Action Planning, Agricultural Education, and Edible Gardens) became available. Due to Turnkey grants being capped at \$50,000, there were nearly as many Turnkey projects awarded as Implementation grants (256 vs. 260) despite the drastic funding difference.

From 2021-2024, nonprofits received roughly twice as many Implementation and Turnkey grants as schools (148 vs. 88 and 158 vs. 79, respectively). Producers received twice as many Implementation than Turnkey grants (6 vs. 3), and local governments received roughly the same number of grants in both categories.

Figure 9. Awards by Grant Type: 2021-2024

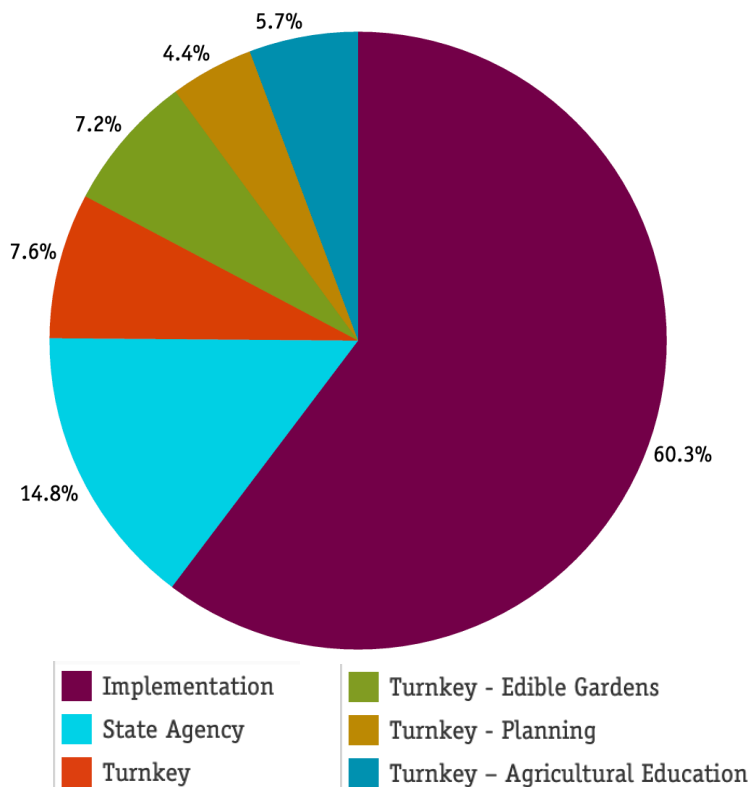
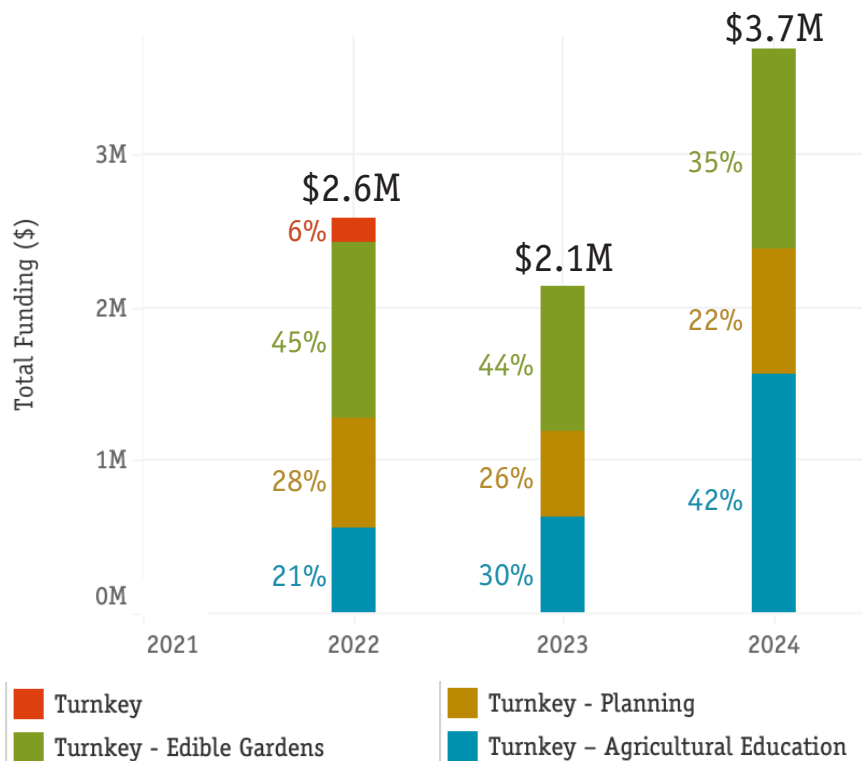


Figure 10. Turnkey Grant Awards: 2022-2024



As the only permanent source of dedicated funding for farm to school and farm to ECE work, the Patrick Leahy Farm to School Grant Program has been a catalyst for innovation and community-driven solutions. To ensure these investments continue to grow and reach more communities, it is essential to expand mandatory funding and strengthen the program through updated legislation. This includes making temporary measures, such as allowing larger projects and increasing annual funding, permanent. It is also critical to address barriers to equitable access, such as the non-federal matching requirement, and better connect producers with farm to school markets. While this program provides crucial seed funding, long-term growth and sustainability require additional support through complementary programs such as the Local Food for Schools Cooperative Agreement Program and Local Agriculture Market Programs (LAMP) grants. A commitment to long-term support is needed to ensure these investments continue strengthening communities and expanding local food systems nationwide.

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Thank you to Travis Hearn (USDA) and Kathy Argentar (Pilot Light) for their feedback on this resource.

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About National Farm to School Network

National Farm to School Network (NFSN) is the voice for the farm to school movement and the leading resource for information about policies that impact farm to school. NFSN is an information, advocacy, and networking hub for communities working to bring local food sourcing, school gardens, and food and agriculture education into schools and early care education settings. NFSN provides vision, leadership, and support at the local, state, and national levels to connect and expand the farm to school movement, which has grown to reach approximately 67,300 schools in all 50 states as of 2019. The Network includes more than 20,000 farm to school supporters, a national staff, an advisory board, and partner organizations in all 50 states, Washington, D.C., and U.S. Territories. NFSN's work is deeply rooted in equity, guided by the organization's [Call to Action](#) that 100% of communities will hold power in a racially just food system.