Vermont Farm to School Universal Meals Grant

2017 Request for Proposals

Deadline: October 28, 2016 at 12:00pm

Wednesday, **October 12th from 3:00-4:30pm**, the Vermont Agency of Agriculture, Food & Markets will host a webinar for all potential Vermont Farm to School Grant Program applicants. The webinar will cover all of the basics of the Request for Proposals. There will be time to ask questions, during this interactive webinar. If you are interested in joining in on the webinar, register here: https://attendee.gotowebinar.com/register/5795699890154428929.

THIS IS NOT AN APPLICATION. ALL APPLICATIONS MUST BE SUBMITTED ONLINE THROUGH WEBGRANTS.

CONTACT

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KEY DATES FOR APPLICANTS

September 30, 2016	Request for Proposals (RFP) Released
October 12, 2016	Webinar for applicants: 3:00-4:30 PM. Register at: https://attendee.gotowebinar.com/register/5795699890154428929
October 28, 2016	Applications due online at 12:00pm through WebGrants: https://agriculturegrants.vermont.gov
December 2016	Applicants notified of funding decisions

BACKGROUND: VERMONT FARM TO SCHOOL GRANT PROGRAM

Since 2007 the Vermont Farm to School Grant Program has been awarding Vermont schools with funds to integrate local foods and farm and nutrition education in school cafeterias, classrooms and communities. To date, the program has impacted over 30,000 students and served more than 100 schools.

The goals of the grant program are for schools and school districts to develop sustainable programs that serve food to Vermont students that is as fresh and nutritious as possible; maximize the use of fresh, locally grown, produced and processed foods; educate students about healthy eating habits through nutrition education, including hands-on techniques to make the connections between farming and the foods that students consume; increase the size and stability of farmers' institutional sales; and increase school meal program participation by increasing the selection of foods available to students.

These goals are best achieved when incorporating the three C's of Farm to School: connections between Cafeteria, Classroom and Community. These three components should be included in each application, for example:

- **Classroom** – creating standards-based farm, food system and nutrition curriculum and professional development for teachers.
- **Cafeteria** – using local and seasonal produce, taste tests and professional development for school food personnel.
- **Community** – developing community events, school community gardens, engaging farmers, businesses and other community partners. Together the three C's support healthy children, healthy

agriculture, and healthy communities. Applicants should demonstrate a working relationship between the 3 C's, and be able to demonstrate clear partnerships within the school community.

FARM TO SCHOOL UNIVERSAL MEALS GRANT PROGRAM

Successful school meal programs that experience consistent participation of most students also make successful and sustainable Farm to School programs possible. Universal school meals models allow schools to reach all students with equitable access to quality food, providing a strong foundation for fulfilling the classroom, cafeteria, and community goals of the Farm to School movement in Vermont. In an effort to support schools and communities seeking to reach all students with meals that are fresh, healthy, local and available at no charge, the Vermont Agency of Agriculture, Food & Markets is inviting proposals from schools to access pilot funding to make a sustainable transition to universal meals. Through the adoption of universal meals, we hope to improve the financial viability and stability of school meal programs, thus enabling them to expand their use of Farm to School to improve meal quality and to serve more Vermont students fresh, local food.

Universal Meals is a new pilot component of the Vermont Farm to School Grant Program funded by Vermont's Legislature in 2016. Schools are eligible to participate if their percentage of Directly Certified students is at least 35% and they have a strong commitment to finding a way to move to one of the USDA-administered universal meals provisions--the Community Eligibility Provision (CEP) or Provision 2, which provide reimbursement for schools providing meals at no charge for all students, regardless of socio-economic status.

The goal of the Universal Meals pilot component of the Farm to School Grant Program is to help schools leverage the necessary resources to ensure a sustainable transition into offering universal meals. In order to do this, the grants will provide schools with both the financial and technical assistance tools. In this pilot, institutions with Farm to School programs will be given priority, as there is a strong local food procurement component to the program, providing Vermont producers further opportunity to sell their product to Vermont schools.

LOCAL FOOD PROCUREMENT

In addition to the goal of creating robust and sustainable school meal programs and Farm to School programs, the Vermont Agency of Agriculture, Food & Markets is committed to both the Farm to Plate goal of reaching 10% of all food purchases being local (meeting the Vermont definition of local of originating from within Vermont or within 30 miles) by 2020 and the Vermont Farm to School Network goal:

By 2025, 75% of Vermont schools will lead the cultural shift to a values-based food system that engages 75% of our students in integrated food system education, community-based learning, nourishing universal meals and the experience of self-efficacy and purchases at least 50% from a socially just and environmentally and financially sustainable regional food system.

Willingness to purchase Vermont food and farm products and serve them through the school meal program is an essential component of the Farm to School Grant Program. Universal Meals Grant applications should reflect this with strategies for increasing local food procurement.

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ELIGIBILITY

Any Vermont school, school district, or consortium of Vermont schools in the same School Food Authority (SFA) that has a Direct Certification rate of at least 35% may apply for this competitive grant. Note that the minimum Direct Certification rate for this grant is different than the 40% minimum Direct Certification rate required for CEP or Provision 2 eligibility. Schools must already participate in both the National School Lunch Program and the School Breakfast Program, or must commit to begin participating in both programs as part of the transition to universal meals. For the purposes of this grant program, "universal meals" means both breakfast and lunch. Schools who have completed Vermont Farm to School Planning & Pilot and/or Implementation Grants will be given priority.

FUNDING

Over $45,000 is available to support the pilot of Farm to School Universal Meals Grants from funds provided by the Vermont State Legislature for the 2017 grant cycle. **The maximum amount of a universal meals grant award made available to a school or group of schools will be $9,000**. These are competitive grants**.** Applicants will be notified of awards in December 2016.

Each grant will be supplemented with customized technical assistance support (as described below) contracted to an external service provider partner that will provide grantees the necessary technical assistance, education, and training.

Grant funds may be used, as needed, to support the following activities (these are suggested uses and applications need not be limited to them):

- Administration costs associated with implementing CEP or Provision 2;
- Provide staff with appropriate trainings and the associated costs, such as substitutes, travel fees, and conference or training fees;
- Make needed equipment purchases;
- Establish a reserve fund to offset any increased costs to the school meal program.

Grant recipients are required to submit an invoice and signed grant agreement to the Vermont Agency of Agriculture, Food & Markets before funds can be disbursed.

TRAINING & TECHNICAL ASSISTANCE

The leadership team associated with this project (including principals, superintendents, food service directors, foodservice managers, business managers, and an additional member of the school's Wellness or Farm to School Committee) must attend applicable trainings, which will be made available by state agencies and nonprofit organizations. The training(s) will ensure that the leadership team understands the following:

- How federal nutrition programs, including the two universal meal provisions, work and which ones are appropriate for their school(s);
- School meal enrollment and participation data for their school(s), and the strengths and gaps it reveals in their overall provision of nutrition to all students;
- The connection between universal meals and Farm to School;

- The relationship between nutrition, health, behavior, and learning;
- How different child nutrition programs strengthen or weaken school meal program finances.

In addition to customized trainings, state agencies and nonprofit organizations will provide individualized technical assistance to help schools/bundles with the following:

- Determine their accurate direct certification percentage in order to apply for one of the universal meals provisions;
- Transition to a universal school meals model;
- Increase local food procurement;
- Market their school meals program and universal meals to diverse stakeholders to build school community support;
- Develop a plan to expand student participation in school meals and utilize the appropriate Child Nutrition programs in order to ensure the sustainability of the school meals program;
- Create an action plan, identifying additional support and resources that may be needed;
- Additional topic areas, as needed.

PROJECT TIMELINE

Schools should expect to complete their activities within 18 months of receiving their grant.

- **October 12, 2016**: Informational webinar for prospective applicants; 3:00-4:30pm
- **October 28, 2016**: Applications due by 12:00pm on WebGrants
- **December 2016**: Applicants notified of awards
- **December 2016**: Informational webinar for grant recipients
- **January 2017**: Grantees submit invoices and signed grant agreements and begin accessing technical assistance in preparation to implement universal meals
- **February 8, 2017**: School Teams attend Farm to School Awareness Day at the Statehouse for official grant award ceremony
- **June 30, 2017**: Interim grant reports due
- **September 2017**: Schools implement universal meals for 2017-2018 school year
- **June 30, 2018**: Project completion date
- **July 30, 2018**: Final grant reports due

COMPLETING THE APPLICATION

New for 2016, all Farm to School Grant applications must be submitted through the Vermont Agency of Agriculture, Food & Markets' new online grants management system, WebGrants, at https://agriculturegrants.vermont.gov. Find additional guidance for working with WebGrants in Appendix A.

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Below you will find all of the required application components that you will need to submit online. **Applications must be completed in WebGrants by noon on October 28, 2016**. Project proposals will be reviewed by an advisory panel, which will include representatives from the Vermont Agency of Agriculture, Food & Markets, Vermont FEED, Vermont Farm to School Network, and other stakeholders.

It is highly recommended that before developing an application for the Vermont Farm to School Grant Program schools consult the Vermont School Wellness Policy Guidelines, which were established by the Agency of Education, the Department of Health and the Agency of Agriculture, Food & Markets.

Applicant Information

- Primary contact information—this will be the primary point of contact for all application and grant related communications
    - Contact name and title
    - Mailing address
    - Telephone
    - E-mail
- Name of school(s)
- Name of Supervisory Union
- County
- Grades served (for each school)
- Number of students (for each school)
- % of students Directly Certified as of April 1, 2016 (for each school)
- *For bundles only*: Combined % of students Directly Certified as of April 1, 2016

Fiscal Agent Information

This information is required if an organization OTHER THAN THE APPLICANT will be the recipient of grant funds. Supervisory Unions are always the fiscal agent for schools.

- Fiscal Agent & Federal ID #
- Contact name and title
- Mailing address
- Telephone
- **NOTE**: When a Fiscal Agent is utilized, the grant agreement (contract) is WITH THE FISCAL AGENT, not the applicant organization or business. The fiscal agent bears full responsibility for the grant and for all grant requirements. W9 and Certificates of Insurance are also with the fiscal agent organization.

Grant Contributors

- All individuals who contributed to writing the grant application, including their title(s) and organizational association(s)

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Leadership Team Signatures

- A list of the school staff who have agreed to serve as the Leadership Team for this project, and to attend the trainings that are included as part of the grant program requirements.
- You must obtain signatures from all Leadership Team members.
- The leadership team must include the superintendent, the principals of all participating schools, the food service director for the SU/District/SFA, the food service managers of all participating schools, the business manager, and at least one additional member from each participating school's Wellness Committee or Farm to School Committee.
- The inclusion of other key staff members, such as teachers, school nurses, school counselors, etc. is strongly encouraged. Below is a list of suggested members.

- School administrators
- Food Service manager/directors
- Physical educators
- Students
- Farm to School Coordinators
- School board members
- Health educators
- Parents
- Teachers
- Health Services
- Food Rescue Organizations
- Community health agency (e.g. American Cancer Society)
- Other community representatives
- Farmers and local producers
- Local chefs or food store managers
- Local non-profits (e.g. land conservation or agricultural groups)

Letters of Support

A letter of support from each of the following (submitted online through WebGrants):

- Principal (from each school);
- Food service director (from each school);
- Another supporting Farm to School stakeholder (from each school);
- *For a group of schools only*: superintendent.

Baseline Data

We ask that you provide your best estimate for the following measures from the 2015-2016 school year. *If applying as a district or consortium of schools, please provide this information for each school.* This information will also be requested in interim and final reports for grantees. Our intention for collecting this information at the application stage is to establish baseline metrics for the grant program's impact. Incomplete reporting (with the exception of * items) of this baseline information will **not** affect your application status.

- Number of students involved in Farm to School activities
- Number of farms your school has a relationship with
- Number of farms you buy or receive local product from
- Total dollar amount spent on purchasing food annually, by school meal program*

- Total dollar amount spent on purchasing LOCAL food annually, by school meal program
- Total dollar amount spent on PURCHASING food from school garden
- Pounds of local food DONATED and used in school meals
- Pounds of food DONATED from school garden
- Pounds of surplus food captured and donated to local food rescue organizations
- Pounds of food scraps collected and diverted from the landfill
- % of students that qualify for free and reduced price lunch*
- % of students participating in School Breakfast Program*
- % of students participating in National School Lunch Program*
- Number of nurse visits due to stomach complaints or headache*
- Number of absences*
- Number of behavioral referrals*
- List all sources of local food purchased by school meal program

Narrative Questions

1. *Project Summary (up to 2000 characters—approx. 300 words): 5 pts*

   Provide an overview of your proposal. This is a broad and general statement of what you want to accomplish; it summarizes the application. Include your overall project goal(s) and describe benefits of this project to your school community, being sure to incorporate the 3 C's of Farm to School—connections between Cafeteria, Classroom and Community.

2. *Need and Readiness (up to 1000 characters—approx. 150 words—each bullet): 10 pts*

   - Describe the history and state of your Farm to School programming, in the classroom, cafeteria, and community.
   - Describe how you are using Farm to School to implement your School Wellness Policy.
   - List the federal meal programs that your school currently participates in.
   - Have you considered universal meals in the past? If so, what were the barriers that prevented implementation?

3. *Objectives, Activities and Timelines: 10 pts*

   In this section outline how you plan to use the funding to transition into a successful universal meals program. Specifically address how you will procure more local food and promote the importance of universal meals to all stakeholders (i.e. students, staff, parents, and community members).

   - Objectives should be clear, descriptive statements of what you want to accomplish. They should align with the project goal(s) and should be both attainable and measureable.
   - Activities should be tasks necessary to accomplish an objective. Be sure to identify who will be responsible for each task.
   - The timeline should include anticipated dates of completion for activities.

4. *Project sustainability (up to 1000 characters—approx. 150 words—each bullet): 10 pts*
    - What is the state of your school meal program finances and how are they currently managed?
    - How will you use the grant to improve the overall viability and stability of your school meal program?
    - How do you anticipate that universal meals will help sustain your Farm to School program?
    - Please provide an annual summary of income and expenses for your school meal program from the past year (excluded from word count).
5. *Proposed Project Budget: 10 pts*

    Provide an itemized budget. Costs should be reasonable and directly linked to project objectives and activities. When building your budget, be sure to demonstrate how you will sustain your program beyond the grant time period.

    Although matching funds are not required for this grant program, demonstration of cash or in-kind time provides reviewers with a better understanding of how schools are supporting the transition to universal meals. Therefore, please include any and all other sources of funding for this project.

    ******Total funding request of the grant shall not exceed $9,000******

    Funds may NOT be used for the following expenses:

    - The purchase of foods that are not local products ("local," "locally grown," and any substantially similar term shall mean that the goods being advertised originated within Vermont or 30 miles);
    - School meal program services that are not accessible to students of all income levels;
    - Registration in Jr. Iron Chef or other competitions;
    - Teacher salaries.
6. *Budget Justification (up to 3000 characters—approx. 400 words): 5 pts*

    In addition to itemizing expected expenditures, please provide a budget narrative to justify anticipated costs. All expenses described in this narrative must be associated with expenses that will be covered by the grant. If one area of your budget is significantly higher than other areas, please explain why. The budget justification should also reflect your plan to improve the viability of your school meal program and help sustain your Farm to School program, as outlined in the application.

ADDITIONAL RESOURCES

In addition to this document, there are organizations around the state that may be valuable resources in your Farm to School programing and transition to universal meals. Below is a list of organizations and the regions they support.

- Center for Agricultural Economy (greater Hardwick area)
- Food Connects (Southern Vermont)
- Green Mountain Farm to School (Northeast Kingdom)

- Healthy Roots (Franklin and Grand Isle Counties Vermont)
- Hunger Free Vermont (statewide)
- Marble Valley Grows (Rutland County)
- Rutland Area Farm and Food Link (greater Rutland area)
- Upper Valley Farm to School (Upper Valley region)
- Vermont Community Garden Network (statewide)
- Vermont FEED (statewide)

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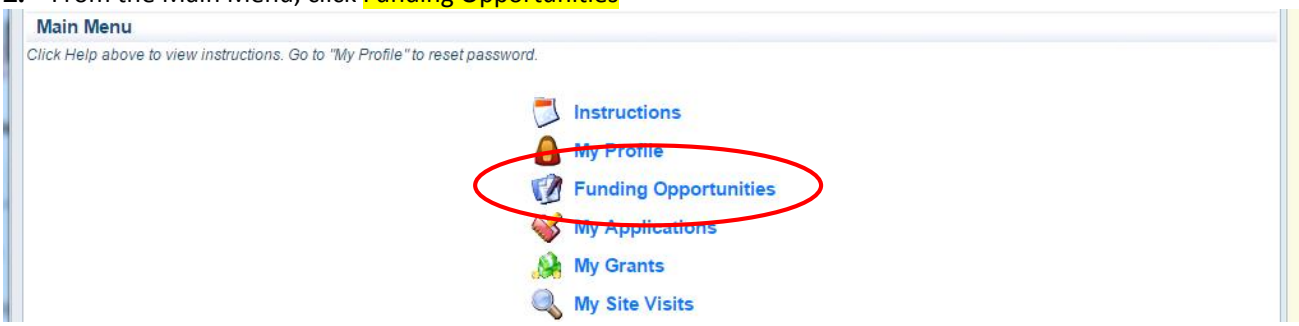
APPENDIX A: WEBGRANTS GUIDE

Instructions for Farm to School Grant Program Applicants

1. **Go to agriculturegrants.vermont.gov. From this page—**
    a. Enter your User ID
    b. Enter your Password
    c. Click Log In
    If you do not have a User ID, click Register Here

2. From the Main Menu, click Funding Opportunities



3. From the Funding Opportunities page, select the appropriate FY17 Farm to School Grant (either Planning & Pilot, Implementation or Universal Meals).

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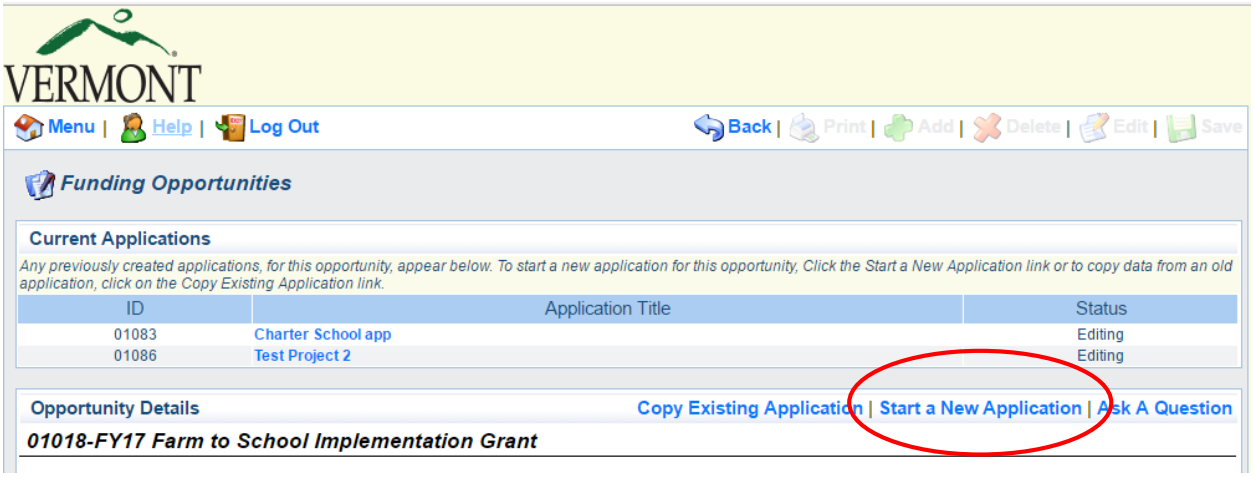
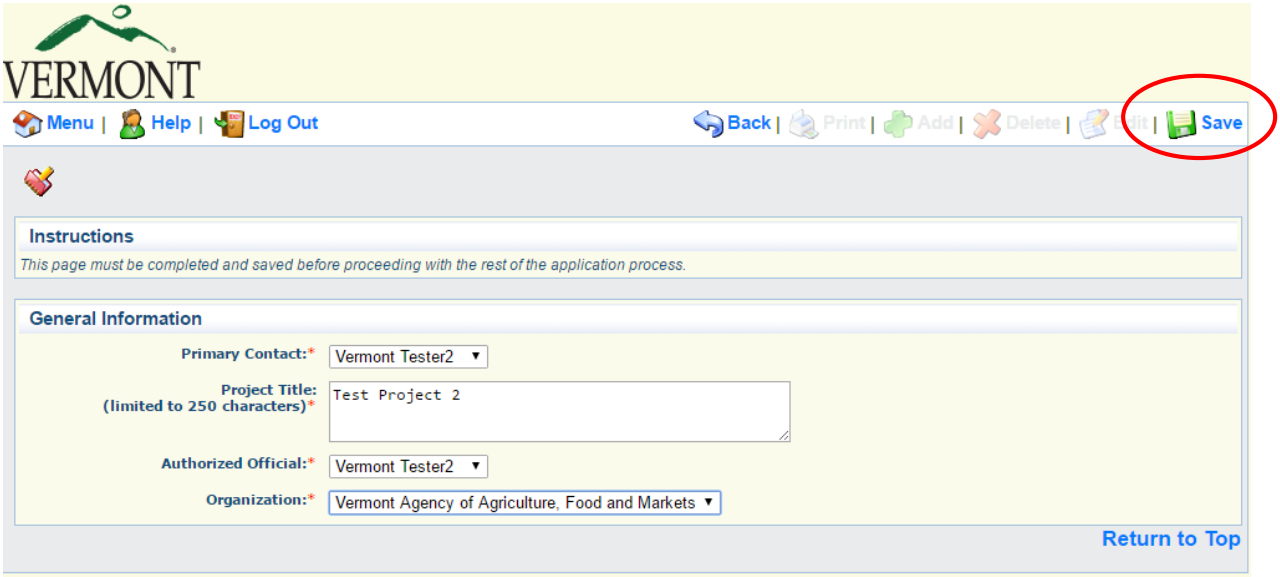
4. Click Start a New Application.



5. Fill out the General Information form. Be sure to provide the information for the person who will be responsible for this grant application. This will be the primary point of contact for all grant related communication.

6. Click Save in the upper right corner to save the General Information form.



After clicking "Save," your project will have an application number. If you need to log out and log back in you can return to your application by clicking "My Applications" in the Main Menu, or by clicking Funding Opportunities, where you will see your application in the top section. ***Do not click "Start a New Application."***

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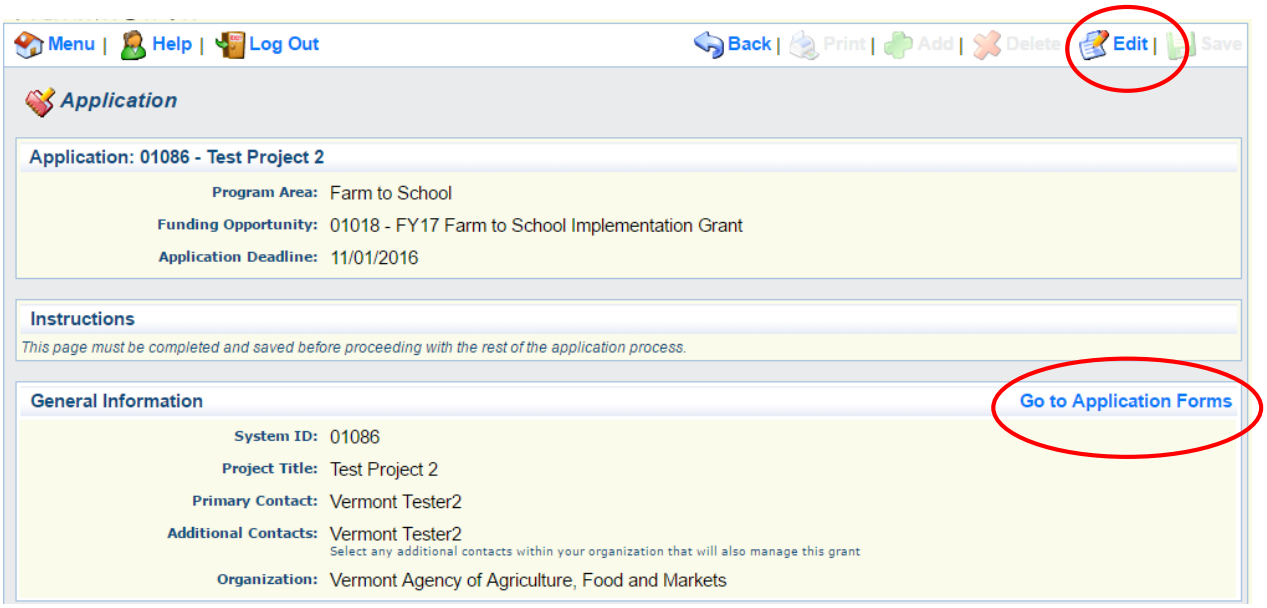
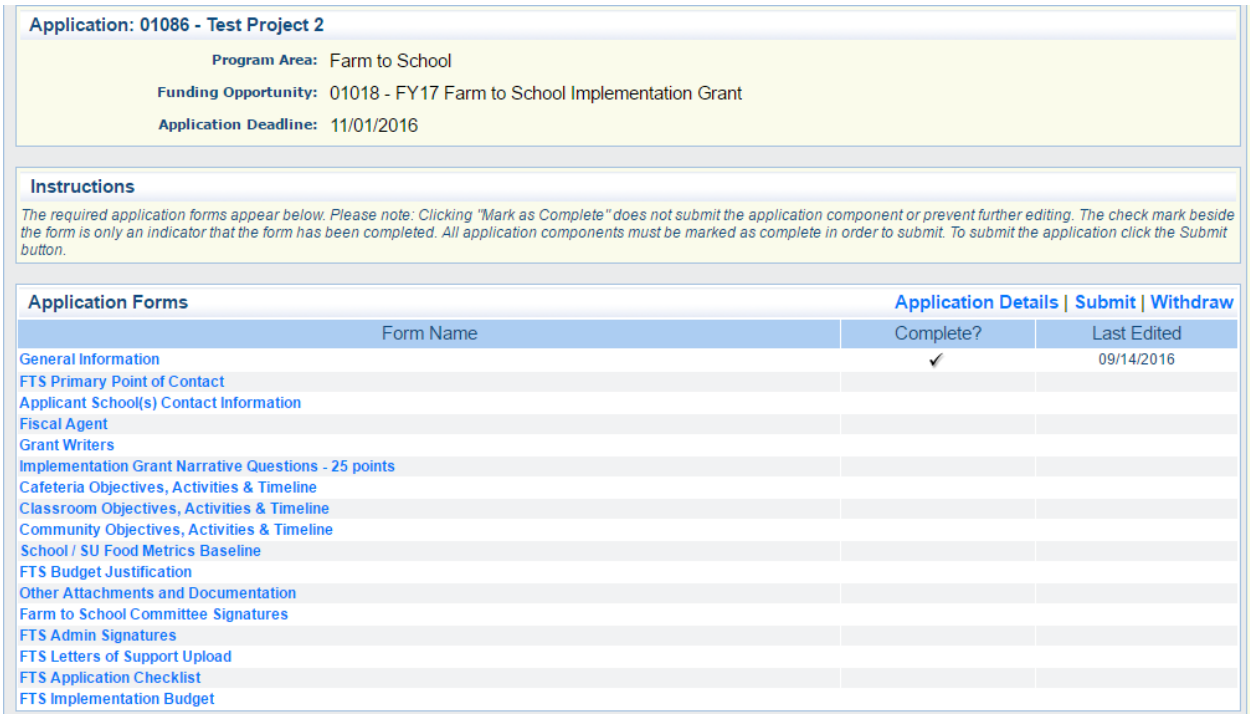
A view will show the completed form. You have the option to click "Edit" and edit your information or select additional users to have access to help complete the application.

7. Click Go to Application Forms to begin completing the forms designated for this funding opportunity.



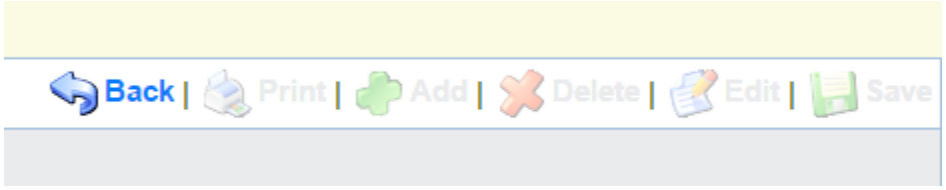
This view is a complete listing of all application forms that you need to complete in order to submit your application.



8. Continue to click on each form in the Application Forms listing.

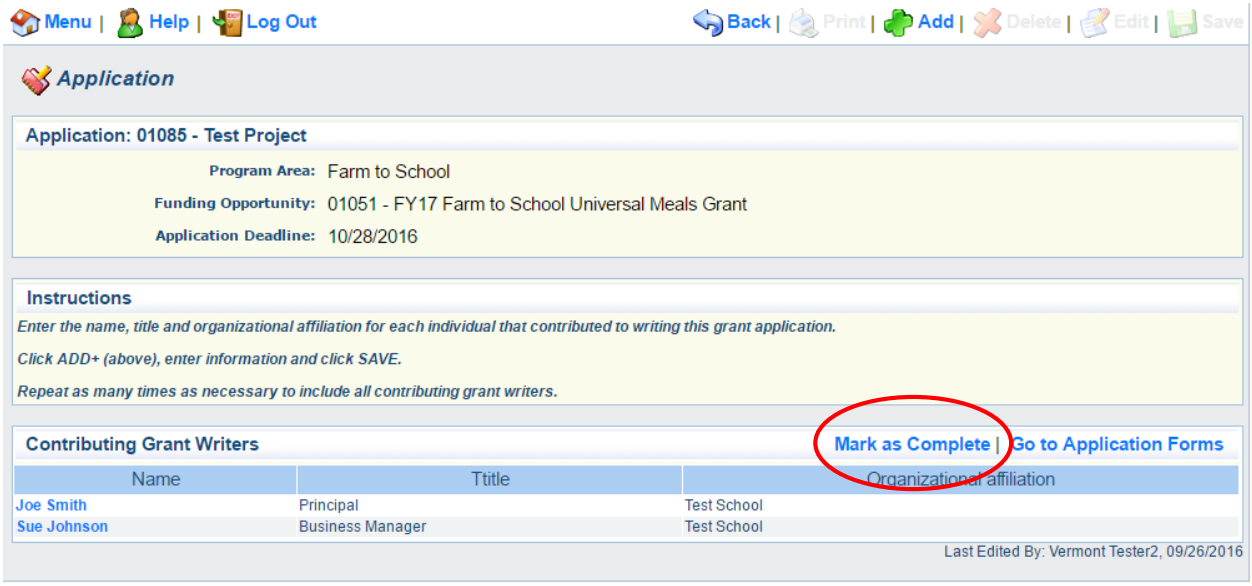
   We find it is much easier to write your essay answers in a word processor such as Microsoft Word to easily catch spelling errors and word counts and then copy and paste your answers into the forms. In the word processor, make sure to check the character count, as WebGrants counts characters rather than words (spaces included).

IMPORTANT: Use the system's Back button (see below) to navigate within the system. Do not use your browser's back button.



9. When you are finished with a form, first click Save and then Mark as Complete at the top of the page.

All forms can be edited and saved as often as necessary but the system will require that ALL fields marked as required (with an asterisk) MUST have entries and EVERY form must be "Marked as Complete" before you can submit your application. You will receive a pop-up message notifying you of this if you try to submit without completing these steps.



You can edit forms that have been saved. After clicking on the form's name, click "Edit" in the top right corner of the form. When finished click "Save," then "Mark as Complete." You can still edit forms that have been marked as complete. Click "Go to Application Forms" to return to the menu.

10. Submit your application.
When all forms have been marked as complete, you may return to your application page by either clicking "Go to Application Forms" or from the main menu. If everything looks good, click "Submit."

If you have missed any required fields, you will not be able to submit your application. Upon submission, you will receive a Confirmation Page confirming that your application has been submitted.