

SPHERE Grant Frequently Asked Questions:

Q: Who is eligible to apply for the SPHERE Grant?

A: Certified Connecticut farmers' markets identified as a Farmers' Market Nutrition Program (FMNP) authorized location are eligible. The organizer/market master of the farmers' market should apply for the SPHERE Grant. The market master of the farmers' markets may also apply through a fiduciary agent, like the municipality where the farmers' market is held, or a nonprofit 501(c)(3) organization.

Q: What is the maximum amount an applicant could be awarded?

A: The maximum award is not determined.

The amount awarded shall be based on FMNP check redemption history. If redemption history is unavailable, justification of funds requested may be based upon the value of SFMNP checks distributed to your markets' municipality and surrounding municipalities in 2017. The market master is required to return any unspent funds to DoAg at the end of the season.

Q: What is the intent of the SPHERE Grant?

A: The SPHERE Grant is intended to create a SFMNP check doubling program for the 2018 farmers' market season using 2017 SFMNP funds which were allocated after the 2017 SFMNP closed.

Q: Who benefits from the SPHERE Grant?

A: Connecticut seniors who have received 2018 SFMNP checks will benefit by having the value of their 2018 SFMNP checks doubled so they can purchase more CT Grown produce, cut herbs, and honey at authorized farmers' markets.

Connecticut farmers certified to accept 2018 SFMNP checks at authorized farmers' markets will benefit by selling more to seniors who have the doubling vouchers.

Q: Who implements the SFMNP check doubling program funded by the SPHERE Grant?

A: The market master of the farmers' market is responsible for implementation of the SFMNP check doubling program. Costs associated with implementation of the SPHERE Grant are not covered by the SPHERE Grant. SPHERE Grant funds can only be used to double the value of 2018 SFMNP checks.

Q: Where are the SFMNP check doubling vouchers distributed?

A: The doubling vouchers can be picked up by a senior with 2018 SFMNP checks at the market master table during a farmers' market.

Q: When will the SFMNP check doubling take place?

A: SFMNP check doubling take place from July 1, 2018 to October 31, 2018 or until the doubling vouchers are exhausted at an awarded farmers' market.

Q: How will SFMNP check doubling occur?

A: The SFMNP check doubling will take place at the farmers' market. The market master will set up a designated area for distribution of doubling vouchers to seniors with 2018 SFMNP checks. Only seniors who have 2018 SFMNP checks can be issued doubling vouchers. The doubling vouchers are only valid the day they are issued, so seniors should only be issued the number of doubling vouchers they expect to use that day. When using a doubling voucher a senior must present the farmer with one \$3, 2018 SFMNP check and one \$3, doubling voucher.

The farmer should ask the senior to sign the back of both the doubling voucher and the 2018 SFMNP check. The farmer must make sure that each doubling voucher is accompanied by a 2018 SFMNP check. All of the rules of the 2018 SFMNP apply to the doubling vouchers (cash not be given as change, etc.).

Q: How do the farmers accept the doubling vouchers?

A: The farmer must accept the doubling vouchers the same way 2018 SFMNP checks are accepted.

The farmer must verify the date the voucher is used is the same as the date of issue written on the doubling voucher.

Q: How does the farmer get paid?

A: Unlike the 2018 SFMNP checks, the doubling voucher does not get deposited into the farmer's bank account. Instead, the farmer will redeem all doubling vouchers received with the market master who distributed the vouchers to the seniors earlier that same day.

The market master must verify that the date the farmer redeems the voucher is the same as the date of issue written on the doubling voucher.

The market master should pay the farmer using a check issued from the designated SPHERE checking account or QuickBooks account. It is acceptable for the market master to pay the farmer the week after the vouchers are collected from the farmer.

Q: What do the SFMNP doubling vouchers look like?

A: DoAg will provide the market master with numbered vouchers to be issued to seniors. The market master will write the date each voucher is issued on the front of each voucher. The senior will sign the back of each voucher as it is used in conjunction with a 2018 SFMNP check to purchase CT Grown produce, cut herbs, and honey from farmers.

The farmer will redeem all vouchers collected with the market master each day the farmers' market is open for business. The date the voucher is issued by the market master should be the same as the date the voucher is redeemed by the farmer.

The market master will use SPHERE Grant funds to pay the farmer for all of the vouchers collected. Payment to the farmer should be made using a check written from the designed SPHERE checking account or QuickBooks account. Vouchers should only be used once and saved by the market master for return to DoAg (along with the Final Report) when SPHERE funds are exhausted or at the end of the season.

Q: What does a market that's received a grant do after all the funds/doubling vouchers have been distributed and paid out?

A: After all funds/doubling vouchers have been distributed and paid out the market master will submit a Final Report to DoAg that provides a brief description of how the SFMNP check doubling program was implemented at your market. DoAg will provide a Final Report template. The market master will also provide DoAg with all the redeemed vouchers that have been collected from farmers throughout the season, and a copy of all account statements from the designed SPHERE checking account or QuickBooks account.

Q: Does the market have to pay the farmers every week?

A: No, the market does not have to pay the farmers every week, but the market master must collect vouchers from farmers at the end of each market. The market master must verify that the date the farmer redeems the voucher is the same as the date of issue written on the doubling voucher.

Q: How does my market apply for the SPHERE Grant?

A: Visit the DoAg website at <http://www.ct.gov/doag/cwp/view.asp?a=3260&Q=601116&PM=1> to download a SPHERE Grant application. Submit the completed application via email to mark.hood@ct.gov by April 17, 2018 at 4:00 p.m.

Q: If I'm awarded what happens next?

A: DoAg will put together a contract based on the information included in your application. Two copies of the contract will be sent to each market master. The market master (or their fiduciary agent) will sign and return both copies of the contract to DoAg. Once a Purchase Order is issued, grant funds will be disbursed to the market master by June 30, 2018.

Q: Are there admin or indirect funds to cover the costs of administering the program?

A: No. Any administrative or indirect costs must be covered by the applicant.

Q: Why is it preferred that I set up a separate bank account or QuickBooks account for this grant?

A: In order to track the funds we ask for a separate bank account or QuickBooks account to be used. This will ensure SPHERE funds only go to farmers certified to accept SFMNP. Any unspent funds must be returned to DoAg.

Q: What are the responsibilities of a market if awarded?

A: The market is responsible for implementation of the SFMNP check doubling program which includes the following:

- Distribution of doubling vouchers to seniors.
- Redeeming farmers for vouchers they collect from seniors.
- Closeout of the project when all funds have been expended or at the end of the season.

Q: Will everyone who applies receive an award?

A: The SPHERE Grant is a competitive application process and not all applicants are guaranteed an award. A list of farmers' markets that are awarded SPHERE Grant funds will be shared with the SFMNP check distribution sites in the areas of the awarded market.