

# Funding Opportunity Announcement: Association of Food and Drug Officials (AFDO) STATE MANUFACTURED FOOD STUDENT INTERNSHIP PROGRAM

## Participating Organizations

The Association of Food and Drug Officials (AFDO) will be issuing subawards under its MFRPA “Continuing to Support an Integrated Food Safety System Through Implementation of Program Standards, Data Sharing, Collaboration, and State Training and Equipment Grants” Cooperative Agreement which was awarded by the U.S. Food & Drug Administration (FDA).

## Funding Opportunity Announcement (FOA)

State Manufactured Food Student Internship Program (Summer 2026)

## Funding Opportunity Purpose

The intended purpose of this “State Manufactured Food Student Internship Program” is to support state regulatory manufactured food safety programs in the implementation of a student internship program. By developing the future manufactured food regulatory program workforce through a uniform internship program, both students and regulatory agencies will benefit.

## Key Dates

- Open date: Submissions will be accepted starting October 13, 2025
- Application deadline: December 12, 2025, by 7:59 PM EST; *late applications will not be accepted. All completed applications shall be submitted in the online AFDO Student Internship grant portal.*
- Notice of award: AFDO will issue grant award or decline letters on or before January 9, 2026, by 7:59 PM EST
- AFDO Support for Advertising Internship Opportunities with Awardees: January – April 2026
- Awardee Interview and Hiring Completed by Awarded Agency: No later than May 1, 2026
- Internship start date: Should fall between May 11, 2026 and June 15, 2026
- Internship end date: Should fall between July 31, 2026 and September 4, 2026
- Reporting due date: October 30, 2026 (final documentation related to project deliverables)

## Application Instructions

Applications shall follow the instructions found within this FOA. Conformance to all requirements is required and will be strictly enforced. Applications that are incomplete or do not adhere to these instructions may be delayed or not accepted for final review.

All completed applications shall be submitted in the AFDO Student Internship grant portal. Applications cannot include attachments. See more about requesting an account and logging in at [www.afdo.org/student-internship-grant/](http://www.afdo.org/student-internship-grant/). Contact the project PI with any questions or issues; Autumn Schuck, [aschuck@afdo.org](mailto:aschuck@afdo.org).

## SECTION II. – FUNDING OPPORTUNITY DESCRIPTIONS

### Program Goals and Objectives

AFDO is announcing the availability of funding to be awarded for up to one year, to support a summer college internship project for Summer 2026. Future support may be available depending on future continued availability of funds.

**Only state programs with a manufactured food regulatory component are eligible to apply for this funding opportunity.**

The goal of this “State Manufactured Food Student Internship Program” is to facilitate the development of college interns/student workers, while cultivating their interest in a food safety regulatory career path. Interns under this project will work within an agency’s regulatory manufactured food safety program and supplemental food program components during the Summer of 2026. By leveraging resources and focusing efforts at the college student/intern level, in coordination with a state manufactured food program, college students will:

- ✓ Gain a better understanding of the state’s regulatory roles and responsibilities,
- ✓ Complete some initial training and food safety general education online courses,
- ✓ Shadow inspectors in the field,
- ✓ Focus on a special project supporting an aspect of the manufactured food program,
- ✓ Participate in key meetings with leaders and program managers, and
- ✓ Be better prepared to join the regulatory food protection workforce upon graduation.

The intent of this project aims to have participating agencies secure interns that are pursuing a degree that lends itself to a future career in a food safety regulatory field. While this is not expressly required, the student hired for this internship will ideally have a major related to agriculture, food science, environmental science, animal or dairy science, public health, microbiology, nutrition science, pre-vet or pre-med, or another related major.

The requirements that all participating agencies/interns must complete during a 3-month period over the Summer of 2026 include:

1. An immersive internship experience that allows the student to better understand how the state program operates, which can be accomplished in a variety of ways (e.g., a student’s participation in field inspection shadowing, lab work, inclusion in meetings and training events, standard operating procedures’ review/updates, website updates, etc.).
2. Completion of a minimum of five (5) online general education courses offered by AFDO (coursework will be available free of charge to the participating students, <https://www.afdo.org/training/geneds/>).
3. Completion of a minimum of three (3) field shadowing experiences, with at least one of these shadowing experiences to be to a manufactured food processor under the state’s regulatory purview.
4. Active participation in three (3) webinars offered by AFDO.
5. Support of an internal manufactured food-related project that a student worker can focus on during the internship. This project can be a part of an existing or future project that the agency

is working on. The intern must also provide AFDO with a summary update (1-3 PPT slides, template will be provided) about their project during the last week of their internship.

6. Interns will complete a post-assessment survey about their experience. Additionally, there will be optional opportunities to help promote the program and the students' experiences via a request for a student-recorded video, and/or an interview for AFDO's podcast.

Additional internship duties, training, and experiences may be added by the awarded agencies at their discretion. Duties assigned to the intern cannot be solely intended to support data entry, filing, or other clerical/administrative-related duties.

AFDO is supporting state food programs with this FOA to encourage student interns to develop an interest in food safety regulatory careers and encourage them to seek careers with food safety regulatory programs.

**The primary objectives and activities for this project are to:**

1. Hire one to two interns for Summer 2026 for an internship that is at least part-time (20 hours/week minimum), up to full-time (40 hours/week maximum).
2. Utilize available internship templates, tools and other available resources provided by AFDO for consistency of the internship activities, training, and field work (see more <https://www.afdo.org/student-internship-grant/>). Additionally, interns and supervisors (or another agency representative) will participate in provided mentorship, networking and other training opportunities offered by AFDO (e.g., 3 educational webinars planned).
3. Support an internal manufactured food-related project that a student worker can focus on during the internship. This project can be a part of an existing or future project that the agency is working on.
4. Complete an end-of-grant report at the conclusion of the internship, to be completed in the AFDO Student Internship online grant portal (all narrative report details and budget reimbursement requests are due on or before October 30, 2026).
5. Develop candidates who are interested in the regulatory food safety career by exposing them to field experiences and future regulatory career aspirations. This can be achieved by the student becoming familiar with the state's standard operating procedures and policies related to food program, with particular focus on manufactured food program inspectional and investigational activities, meetings, trainings, outreach events and more.
6. Provide opportunities for the student to complete training and general education courses, shadow inspectors in the field, and see how the program operates both administratively and operationally.

## Section II. Award Information

### Funds Available and Anticipated Number of Awards

AFDO has funding available to award up to \$130,000 in 2026 to support college student workers/internship programs at state manufactured food regulatory programs.

Based on anticipated funding, this project may support at least seven (7) separate agency awards. An agency may request up to two (2) interns, for a maximum requested award amount of \$12,000 per intern for up to 12 weeks of full-time work (this includes a \$20/hour pay cap, 40 hours/week for up to 3

months per intern; however, agencies may have different pay scales for student workers, which can be outlined in the budget request).

This amount includes funding that may be utilized for:

- Intern salary
- Any necessary equipment or supplies for the intern
- Intern's travel costs related to field work and shadowing inspections
- Any training/meeting opportunities that incur travel/per diem costs or registration fees

Purchasing of computers or vehicles under this project is not authorized.

Each participating agency may request up to \$3,500 in supplemental funds for the agency's administrative costs and oversight of the interns, to support the agency's staff time and benefits as direct costs only. No indirect costs are allowable.

## Section III. Eligibility Information

### Eligible Applicants

State regulatory agencies with a manufactured food regulatory program may apply. As part of their internship, students may support other food-related activities across the food safety program; however, at a minimum, at least half of their time (50%), activities, and special project work must be dedicated to the agency's manufactured food program.

### Required Application Submission

All application submission documentation must be submitted in the AFDO Student Internship grant portal (find all the grant portal information here: <https://www.afdo.org/student-internship-grant/>). A review committee will review the applications received by the deadline and applicants will be notified on the status of their application on or before January 9, 2026, for funding in 2026. Any questions or concerns about the application process may be submitted directly to [aschuck@afdo.org](mailto:aschuck@afdo.org).

### Eligible Individuals (Program Director/Principal Investigator)

Any individual(s) with the skills, knowledge, and resources necessary to carry out the objectives of this project is invited to work with their organization to develop an application for support.

## Section IV. Application and Submission Information

1. **Form of application submission:** All completed applications shall be submitted in the AFDO Student Internship online grant portal. **PLEASE NOTE the grant portal does not auto-save; save your grant application early and often!** Applications must include summary details in the following areas:
  - a. Agency Experience. Description of the agency's background experience in hiring and training interns and/or student workers, if applicable. Briefly describe the types of programs and projects that have been (or will be) established for interns, and/or typical duties they have historically been assigned.
  - b. Key Personnel. Description of the agency's personnel who will directly oversee and interact with intern(s) on key projects and a brief explanation of their experience in developing new employees or interns. This can include more than one person, but at least one primary supervisor must be named.

- c. **Agency Capabilities.** Brief description of the agency's manufactured food program and its capability and capacity to hire and oversee an intern within the scope of this program's goals and objectives.
  - d. **Agency plan for college interns.** Description of what activities the intern will be participating in during their tenure, and how the agency plans to utilize and develop the intern, along with details for a special project that will be completed.
  - e. **Metrics and Outcomes.** Description of the agency's goals and objectives to successfully complete the scope of this project, with any measurable metrics or outcomes the agency anticipates because of the internship.
2. **Content limitations:** There are word count limitations within the AFDO Student Internship online grant portal to help keep the application process simple and straightforward. Reports can be drafted with ongoing edits and internal review/sharing prior to submitting final applications for review. Remember to save the application often throughout the completion process.
3. **Budget:** Each application must be accompanied by a simple budget worksheet that describes how the requested funds will be spent for one year of funding (Summer 2026). This will also be completed within AFDO Student Internship online grant portal. A formal budget "justification" is NOT required unless an applicant wishes to provide any additional explanation for unique or special funding circumstances.
  - **Allowable costs:** Student salary/stipend; agency personnel costs related to overseeing student worker(s); travel costs or supplies related to a student conducting field work or attending a related training, meeting, event, etc. Please provide information about any agency-specific hourly requirements or predetermined salary for paying interns in this section.
  - **Non-allowable costs:** No indirect costs will be allowed. No computers or vehicles may be purchased. No building or reconstruction costs will be allowed.
4. **Submission dates and times:** Please refer to the "Key Dates and Times" in Part I, Overview Information. Late applications will not be accepted as the portal will close at the deadline.

## Section V. Application Review Information

### Scored Review Criteria:

Reviewers will consider each of the review criteria below in the determination of merit for funding:

- a. **Background experience.** Demonstration of internal capacity (resources, key personnel, and infrastructure) necessary to meet the goals and objectives of this program (total weight = 20 points).
- b. **Summer Project.** Demonstration that the agency will provide an immersive internship experience for Summer 2026, with the capabilities to meet or exceed the basic internship requirements outlined in this program AND includes a special project for each requested student worker to focus on during their tenure (total weight = 50 points).
- c. **Project Metrics and Outcomes.** Demonstration of agency-specific goals and objectives to successfully complete this program, which benefits both the student worker and manufactured food program and includes outcomes that are measurable/achievable products from the internship (total weight = 30 points).

Budgets will be considered to ensure the requested period of support is fully justified and reasonable in relation to the cooperative agreement. The budget cannot exceed the maximum amounts set forth in this FOA. AFDO reserves the right to negotiate the requested budget amount, to ensure use of funds will be maximized during the budget period.

#### Review and Selection Process:

Applications will be evaluated for merit by a Review Committee using the stated review criteria. As part of an objective review, applications will receive a written critique, but no appeals will be accepted. Applications will compete for available funds with all other recommended applications submitted in response to this FOA. The final determining factors will be considered in making funding decisions:

- a. Merit of the overall internship framework and proposed project as determined by the objective review.
- b. Availability of funds.
- c. Relevance of the proposed activities and project as it relates to manufactured food program priorities.

## Section VI. Award Notice

A formal notification in the form of a grant award or decline letter will be sent by AFDO to each applicant organization. Successful applicants will be notified of additional information that may be required or other actions leading to an award. The decision not to award a grant, or to award a grant at a particular funding level, is discretionary and is not subject to appeal. Awardees must comply with any funding restrictions described in Section IV.3. Pre-award costs cannot be charged against the awarded grant.