



The Golden Root Award | Hosted by the Iowa Farm to School and Early Care Coalition

2026 APPLICATION PREVIEW

About the Application

The annual Golden Root Award is a celebration of Iowa schools and early care and education (ECE) sites working to grow and share their love of local food and community. Applicants are asked to answer a series of 10 multiple choice questions followed-by one open-ended question to share the story of their farm to school or ECE initiatives.

****Note:** Respondents are encouraged to communicate and collaborate with additional district or organizational staff to effectively and accurately respond to the question included in the application. If you don't know about a program or initiative, who else might you ask?

- **Bronze, Silver and Golden Root Awards:** Once scored, applicants who receive a minimum 10 point score will receive a badge and certificate, denoting their certification as a bronze, silver, or golden root award winner.
- **The Outstanding Award:** The Outstanding Award recognizes schools and early care and education programs operating outstanding farm to school and ECE initiatives. Outstanding Awards will be presented to one school applicant and one ECE applicant, who will receive:
 - Free registration for two staff to attend the [2026 Iowa Farm and Food Conference](#), hosted by the Iowa Farm to School and Early Care Coalition and Iowa State University Extension and Outreach, FFED; an award ceremony will take place to celebrate award winners in-person as part of the event.
 - A framed "Outstanding Award" certificate of recognition and a virtual "Outstanding Award" badge.
 - Recognition by the Iowa Department of Agriculture and Land Stewardship at the 2026 Iowa State Fair!

2026 APPLICATION QUESTIONS

Eligibility

To be considered for the Golden Root Award, organizations must be actively participating in a USDA Child Nutrition Program and in good standing.

Does your organization currently participate in a USDA Child Nutrition Program?

- Yes, I operate the National School Lunch Program (NSLP)
- Yes, I operate the Child and Adult Care Food Program (CACFP)
- No

I attest that my organization is in good standing with the USDA Child Nutrition Program.

- Yes
- No



Contact Information

NSLP APPLICANTS | Contact Information: K-12 School Building or Residential Child Care Institution

- School Building or Site Name
- School District Name
- Primary Contact Name
- Primary Contact Position/Role
- Primary Contact Email
- Primary Contact Phone Number
- School Building or Site Address
- What grade levels are served at your building?
- Total number of schools in district
- Total number of students in your school building or site

CACFP APPLICANTS | Contact Information: Early Care and Education

- Name of Early Care and Education program
- Primary Contact Name
- Primary Contact Position/Role
- Primary Contact Email
- Primary Contact Phone Number
- Program Address
- Total number of kids enrolled
- Do you operate a center-based or home-based Early Care and Education program?
 - Center-Based
 - Home-Based

Application Questions

In responding to the following questions, consider farm to school or farm to early care and education (Farm to ECE) activities that your site has led in the **past year**. Scoring: This section is worth up to 50 points.

1. Has your program offered locally grown foods during breakfast and/or lunch?
 - Yes. Please name your farmer and/or food hub partners here: _____
 - No
2. Have students participated in taste tests that feature locally grown food?
 - Yes. Please name your farmer and/or food hub partners here: _____
 - No
3. Have students interacted with farmers through field trips to farms that grow food and/or through farmer visits to the school/childcare?
 - Yes. Please name your farmer and/or food hub partners here: _____
 - No
4. Has your site promoted your local farm to school or ECE efforts to your students and/or community?
 - Yes
 - No



5. Have teachers integrated farm to school or ECE into standards-based curriculum or early learning standards?
 - Yes
 - No
6. Has your school or early care program grown an edible garden on-site?
 - Yes
 - No
7. Have students participated in hands-on cooking and food activities utilizing local food?
 - Yes
 - No
8. Have community partnerships (e.g. with families, chefs, local food educators, or other local leaders) supported your farm to school or ECE initiatives?
 - Yes
 - No
9. Have any employees at your organization (e.g. yourself, teachers, nutrition staff, administration, etc.) participated in farm to school or ECE professional development?
 - Yes
 - No
10. Has farm to school or ECE language been adopted in a policy or procedure at your site (e.g. farm to school is present in your wellness policy)?
 - Yes
 - No

Let's get to the root of it! In this final question, tell us about the passion, dedication, and creativity behind your work. Assume the reviewers know nothing about your work. This is your opportunity to brag on your program! What makes your school or early care site's efforts outstanding? Use this question as your moment to inspire the review committee and showcase why your site is a leader in supporting farm to school or farm to ECE! **Please share a 200-500 word response here.** *Not sure what to write about?* Consider the work you're doing with local food procurement, gardening, family engagement, community partnerships, or hands-on food education. Tell us about it!

Please upload 3 pictures that showcase your work and could be shared with the public.

- Upload image 1 here.
- Upload image 2 here.
- Upload image 3 here.

CONFIRMATION

I attest that I have permission to use the attached images in email communications, websites, and print materials promoting the practice of farm to school and early care. By typing my name below, I attest that I have on file, and can produce, if requested, release forms for all minor children who can be identified in the attached images.

- Yes, type your full name here:
- No



I understand that the Golden Root Award Committee reserves the right to request additional information or documentation to clarify or verify farm to school and early care activities.

- Yes, type your full name here:
- No

I attest that I have permission from my organization to submit this application and understand that they will receive notification of award when determined. If you are a home-based childcare provider, you may skip this question.

- I agree to these terms
 - Yes
 - No
 - Not applicable, I am a home-based childcare provider
- Please enter the email address of your supervisor(s).
 - K-12 School: Enter email of your Principal and Superintendent:
 - Child Care Center: Enter email of your Child Care Director: