

Request for Information – Local Foods Purchase Assistance Program Draft Application

Key dates and submission instructions

- **RFI posted on:** April 11, 2022
- **Questions about this RFI should be submitted no later than:** 8:00 a.m. on April 18, 2022
- **Submit questions about this RFI to:** Alexandra Cortes, Alexandra.cortes@state.mn.us
- **Who may respond?** All interested stakeholders are welcome to respond to this RFI.
- **RFI responses due by:** 5:00 p.m. on April 18, 2022
- **Format for responses:** Via this [Microsoft Forms link](#)

Objective of RFI

The Minnesota Department of Agriculture (MDA) seeks to identify and obtain information related to [Minnesota's draft application](#) for the [U.S. Department of Agriculture \(USDA\) Local Food Purchase Assistance \(LFPA\) Program](#).

This is **not** a Request for Proposal (RFP). The MDA may or may not issue an RFP in the future that relates to this Request for Information (RFI).

Background and overview

The USDA LFPA Cooperative Agreement Program offers states and federally recognized Tribal Governments two years of funding to implement a LFPA program. This funding is a one-time, non-competitive opportunity with a negotiable start date. A primary goal of this program is to purchase food from Socially Disadvantaged producers* and distribute this food to underserved communities throughout the state.

Minnesota's draft application for this program was prepared following two virtual public input sessions held in March, two open meetings with the MDA Emerging Farmers' Working Group, and conversations with staff from the Minnesota Departments of Health, Education, and Human Services.

Based on this input, the MDA proposes to use LFPA funds to establish a program that allows communities to determine for themselves how local food can be procured and distributed to underserved individuals. This includes establishing a framework for ongoing public engagement that can support community-informed decisions on the continued direction of program design, implementation, and evaluation of Minnesota's LFPA funds. This draft application is being shared with the public for comment in that spirit, although we recognize there is a limited window for the public to submit further feedback prior to the USDA deadline and the MDA's planned submission of this application later this month.

The draft application proposes that Minnesota's LFPA funds begin in mid-September 2022. Pending approval from USDA, this would allow for continued engagement and planning for program design throughout the summer of 2022. Many details remain to be confirmed about the implementation of this program, as outlined in the draft application. We look forward to feedback on the broad plans proposed here and continued engagement with stakeholders following the application submission to build a program that effectively serves Minnesota's socially disadvantaged farmers and underserved communities.

***USDA definition of Socially Disadvantaged producers:** Socially Disadvantaged Farmer or Rancher is a farmer or rancher who is a member of a Socially Disadvantaged Group. A Socially Disadvantaged Group is a group whose

members have been subject to discrimination on the basis of race, color, national origin, age, disability, and, where applicable, sex, marital status, familial status, parental status, religion, sexual orientation, genetic information, political beliefs, reprisal, or because all or a part of an individual's income is derived from any public assistance program.

Information requested

Stakeholders are asked to review [Minnesota's draft application for the LFPA](#) and respond to one or more of the 10 questions asked on the Microsoft Form. The survey is estimated to take 10 -15 minutes to complete depending on the amount of feedback you choose to provide. It includes questions asking respondents to identify what they like and don't like about the draft application, opportunities to provide more general feedback to the MDA on this process, and demographic questions. All questions are optional.

Disclaimer

1. By responding to the RFI, Responder acknowledges that they have read, understand, and agree with all content in the Disclaimer.
2. Responses to the RFI will not be returned to the Responder.
3. This RFI is being issued to obtain information only and is not intended to result in contracts with any Responder. This RFI, and responses to it, does not in any way obligate the MDA to issue an RFP, award a contract or complete any project, including this one. The MDA reserves the right to cancel this RFI if it is considered to be in its best interest.
4. Responders are solely responsible for all costs and expenses associated with the preparation and submission of a response to this RFI.
5. Responding to this RFI is completely voluntary. Responders will not be excluded from eligibility to participate in any potential future related requests for proposals (RFPs) based on a Responder's decision to respond to this RFI or the content of its response(s) to this RFI. Additionally, responses to this RFI will not provide any advantage to any Responder in any potential future Requests for Proposal, if any occur.
6. All responses to this RFI are public, according to MINN. STAT. 13.03, subd. 1, unless otherwise defined by MINN STAT. 13.37 as "Trade Secrets." Responses should not contain any information that is trade secret or proprietary in nature.

But if a Responder submits information that it believes to be trade secret/confidential materials, at the time the response is submitted the Responder must clearly mark every page of trade secret materials in its response with the words "Trade Secret" or "Confidential," and must justify the trade secret designation for each item in its Response (*be specific, do not make general statements of confidentiality. Include reference to specific facts, licenses, trademarks, etc., and any relevant statutes or other law, such as how the data meets the requirements of MINN. STAT. 13.37, subd. 1(b)*). Any decision by the State to disclose information designated by the Responder as trade secret/confidential will be made consistent with the Minnesota Government Data Practices Act, Ch. 13, and other relevant laws and regulations.

7. As applied by the MDA to this RFI, a statement by a responder that submitted data is copyrighted or otherwise protected does not prevent public access to the data contained in the response.