2024

REQUEST FOR PROPOSALS

MN LOCAL FOOD PURCHASE ASSISTANCE PROGRAM

DEPARTMENT OF AGRICULTURE

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GRANT SUMMARY

Overview

The Minnesota Department of Agriculture (MDA) is offering a second round of Local Food Purchase Assistance (LFPA) funds. These funds are available to communities to determine for themselves how to develop and/or supplement projects that buy local food, purchase most of the food from socially disadvantaged farmers, and distribute that food at no cost to underserved communities. Proposals are expected to encompass a wide range of models for local food procurement and distribution, knowing that there is no one-size-fits-all model that can effectively serve the whole state.

This funding is a short-term economic investment, providing a unique opportunity to build relationships and capacity among stakeholders and the agency. Minnesota LFPA funds are available to the public via a grants process, per public feedback gathered by the MDA in spring 2022. Funding for MN LFPA was made possible by a cooperative agreement from the U.S. Department of Agriculture (USDA) Agricultural Marketing Service (AMS). Its contents are solely the responsibility of the authors and do not necessarily represent the official views of the USDA.

Funding Availability

The MDA anticipates sub-awarding approximately $3.1 million in MN LFPA funding in spring 2024 using a competitive review process. We expect 25 to 35 subawards will be issued, but the final number will depend on the size of awards. The maximum award is $125,000 and the minimum award is $20,000. The award will cover projects of any length through September 14, 2025.

Grantees will receive funding primarily through a reimbursement model. Limited advance funds may be approved based upon documented need and review of applicant financial history (see the "**Payments**" section for additional information).

MN LFPA applications must be submitted by **11:59 p.m. Central Time on May 20, 2024**, to be considered for funding.

Priorities

This grant will prioritize local food procurement from socially disadvantaged farmers (see "**Definitions**" section). This includes farmers of color; American Indian or Alaskan Native farmers; women; farmers with disabilities; and LGBTQIA+ farmers. Additionally, this grant prioritizes collaboration within communities around the state and distributing food in the same community as it was grown. This collaboration supports the development or strengthening of relationships within communities. Individual projects do not need to have large-scale geographic reach; however, consideration will be given to the range of awarded projects to ensure that overall distribution of funding impacts different geographic areas across Minnesota. This grant also prioritizes novel food sourcing and distribution outside of the traditional emergency food/hunger relief structures.

Expected outcomes of MN LFPA funded projects include:

- Strengthen local and regional food systems and support local and socially disadvantaged farmers/producers through building and expanding economic opportunities.

- Establish and broaden partnerships with farmers/producers and the food distribution community to ensure distribution of fresh and nutritious foods to underserved communities.

- Demonstrate the ability of this one-time investment in community-based projects to:

  - Create new and lasting market opportunities for farmers and producers, especially those considered socially disadvantaged.

  - Create new and lasting distribution networks, especially ones that can bring food to underserved communities.

  - Create a needs assessment for infrastructure to support local and regional food systems.

- Demonstrate the utility of creating formal agreements with farmers that may support them in accessing loans or financing for their farm business.

- Demonstrate overall effectiveness of grant administration as informed by public engagement and the overall impact on Minnesota communities.

For a complete list of expected grant outcomes, see **Appendix A**. For information on how MN LFPA grant applications will be evaluated based on these expected outcomes, see the "**Application Evaluation Profile**" section of this document.

How to Submit Questions

All questions must be submitted and received by 9:00 a.m. Central Time on May 13, 2024. Questions should be submitted by emailing **LFPAgrant.MDA@state.mn.us** but may be submitted through email, phone, mail, or in-person communication with authorized MN LFPA staff. Current authorized MN LFPA staff are Valerie Gamble, Lebo Moore, and Alexandra Cortes.

Responses to all questions regarding the application will be posted on the Question and Answer section of the **MN LFPA grant webpage**.

MDA employees are not authorized to provide advice on any applications. Applicants who solicit or receive advice from unauthorized MDA employees may be disqualified from eligibility for a grant award.

Technical assistance with the online application system and budget template will be provided until 5:00 p.m. Central Time on the day of the submission deadline by calling 651-201-6090 or emailing **LFPAgrant.MDA@state.mn.us**

How to Apply

- Submit your MN Local Food Purchase Assistance Program grant application by **11:59 p.m. Central Time on May 20, 2024**, to be considered for funding.

- Applications are preferred to be **submitted online through our grant application system**, Foundant. We encourage applicants to apply early so that there is ample time to receive technical assistance if needed.

  - If you're a new user, you will need to create an account first.

  - Once you're logged in, select "MN Local Food Purchase Assistance Program 2024."

- Request a paper application if needed, by email, phone, or mailed request to the MN LFPA staff listed on the grant webpage. Applications must be postmarked by May 20, 2024, and received by June 3, 2024. Applications postmarked by the correct date, but not received by the two-week deadline will not be considered for funding. The mailing address is:

  > MN Local Food Purchase Assistance Program
  > Commissioner's Office
  > 625 Robert Street North
  > Saint Paul, MN 55155

- When writing your application, use plain, easily understood language. Assume that grant reviewers are generally knowledgeable about community food systems but do not have a thorough or deep understanding of your organization or project.

- Answer all application questions completely within the character limits specified in the grant application but be specific and detailed in your answers so that reviewers can fully understand your project and how it will work.

- Make sure that the application evaluation criteria are clearly represented in your application. The "**Application Evaluation Profile**" included in this document will be used to score and compare the grant applications.

The MDA is not responsible for any technical or logistical problems resulting in the MDA not receiving the application on time. It is the responsibility of the applicant to ensure that submission is received by the MDA before the deadline.

Timeline and Deadlines for Grant Program

It is best practice to submit your application at least 24 hours in advance to prevent unforeseen delays. Applications will not be accepted after the grant deadline. All times listed are in Central Time.

- Questions due no later than 9:00 am . . . . May 13, 2024

- Cut-off for technical assistance with online
  application system & budget template, 5:00 pm . . . . May 20, 2024

- Applications due no later than 11:59 pm . . . . May 20, 2024

- Applicants notified of decisions; grant agreement negotiations begin . . June 26, 2024 (estimated)

- Final contract end date . . . . September 14, 2025

Public Feedback

We welcome comments on this Request for Proposals (RFP). The development of this document and program have been informed by public feedback gathered throughout 2022 as well as previous RFP cycle. Additional feedback will be considered in future program development, as applicable. Stakeholder comments can be emailed to LFPAgrant.MDA@state.mn.us or mailed to the address above at any point.

GRANT ELIGIBILITY

General background and eligibility

Funding will be issued to grantees in the form of federal subawards. Grantees and projects must therefore comply with all applicable federal statutes and state regulations related to grants. These include T**itle 2 of the Code of Federal Regulations (CFR) Part 200** and **Part 400**, along with the most recent **USDA AMS Grants Division General Terms and Conditions**. Within the AMS General Terms and Conditions, Section 13.0 "Administrative and National Policy Requirements" identifies other federal statutes and regulations that apply to these grant funds.

Among the federal requirements for financial management, grantees must have adequate internal controls to assure that federal grant funds are kept separate from other grant funds and general organization expenses and income and have a process for approving expenditures as described in **2 CFR 200.302-303**. As noted in Section 2.0 "Financial Management" of the AMS General Terms and Conditions, "the adequacy of a recipient's financial management system is integral to their ability to account for grant expenditures."

Eligible Applicants

Individuals (including farmers), non-profit organizations, for-profit businesses, tribal nations, government entities, agricultural cooperatives, economic development organizations, educational institutions, and representatives of a community collaboration are eligible to apply. An applicant's legal business entity must be located in Minnesota. Only one application will be eligible per entity (such as state government, county, city, tribe, or organization). Departments within entities must coordinate if more than one department wishes to implement this program.

Current MN LFPA grantees are eligible to apply, but new applicants will be prioritized as per the **Application Evaluation Profile**.

Applicants must:

Provide a Unique Entity ID from the federal **System for Award Management (SAM.gov)** as part of their application, or provide documentation demonstrating the request process for a Unique Entity ID has been initiated via SAM.gov. Please note that applicants are not required to register with SAM.gov, only to get a Unique Entity ID if they do not already have one. Getting a Unique Entity ID validates your legal business name and address as an organization or individual. Requesting and getting a Unique Entity ID is free. An **instructional video** is available if needed. Applicants recommended for an award must have a finalized Unique Entity ID before entering into a grant contract.

Be in good standing with the State of Minnesota:

- Not have back taxes owed.
- Not have defaults on Minnesota state-backed financing for the last seven years.
- If applicable, have acceptable performance on past MDA grants.
- Be compliant with current state regulations.

MDA employees and their spouses are not eligible to receive grants from this program.

Applicants that are recommended for an award will have to meet additional requirements for before entering into a grant contract, as described in the **Pre-Award Risk Assessment** and **Grant Award Agreement** sections.

Eligible Projects

MN LFPA awards are intended to fund projects that procure food primarily from socially disadvantaged farmers and distribute that food at no cost to underserved communities. Projects must:

- Purchase local and regional food, at least 70% of which (by monetary value) must be sourced from within the geographic boundaries of Minnesota. Food must be "unprocessed or minimally processed" (see "**Definitions**" section). This can include fruits, vegetables, seafood, dairy, grains, legumes, wild harvested foods, poultry, and certain cuts of meat.

- Source at least 70% of food purchases (by monetary value) from socially disadvantaged farmers.

- Distribute food to communities in Minnesota, at least 75% of which must be underserved communities. Food may be distributed through direct-to-consumer, wholesale, or retail. The food must be provided at no cost.

  Note: Individuals **cannot** be provided direct funds or voucher systems (e.g., gift cards, coupons) to make individualized purchases. Individuals **cannot** have conditions placed on them to receive the food (i.e., no mandated trainings, classes, or services).

- Have involved others in the project planning and proposal development, as detailed in the "**Working with Others**" section below.

- Offer written, formal agreements to farmers participating in the project. These agreements will establish a plan with farmers and express the grantee's intent to purchase specific items and quantities from the participating farmers during a particular timeframe. Formal agreements can help farmers establish loans and financial assistance.

- Follow all applicable federal, state, tribal, and local regulations regarding food safety, aggregation, procurement, and licensing.

  Note: Buying and aggregating food from multiple suppliers may require a food handling license from the MDA.

- If proposing to fund an existing effort, projects must supplement (i.e., increase or expand) existing food procurement and food distribution activities.

- Not start until the grant contract is signed by all parties and has reached its start date.

- Be completed before September 14, 2025.

Projects may also:

- Address food safety training and implementation.

- Address food waste prevention.

Working with Others

Project planning and proposal development

Each project proposal will need to designate one applicant (also known as the "lead applicant") that meets the "**Eligible Applicants**" criteria. The lead applicant will take responsibility for the grant contract and reporting requirements and will be issued a 1099 from the State of Minnesota for income tax purposes.

Lead applicants must have engaged others (e.g. farmers, businesses, organizations, food recipients) in the planning of their project. Applications will be evaluated in part on the degree to which they demonstrate sharing of power with others during the project planning, and that the project meets collaboratively identified needs. At least one socially disadvantaged farmer must be involved in the project planning.

Budgets and execution of awarded projects

If selected for funding, lead applicants will likely continue working with many of the same entities involved in developing the project proposal. These relationships and the way that power is shared during a project's execution may look different than it does during the project planning.

It is important for applicants to be aware of the two types of financial relationships that can exist within federal grant agreements. LFPA grantees can issue funding to other entities (i.e. pay others outside of their organization for LFPA-related expenses), in one of two ways: 1) through a relationship with a contractor(s) or 2) through a relationship with a subrecipient(s). These distinct options should be taken into account when planning the details of who will be responsible for executing a project and putting together a project budget.

Contractors – for buying of goods and services

Relationships with contractors involve the buying of goods and services for the lead applicant's use in executing the LFPA project. Projects may be executed entirely through use of contractual relationships.

Examples of contractual relationships could include the lead applicant buying eligible food products from farmers, renting cooler space/a vehicle for food transportation/space for food distribution, or paying a business to conduct deliveries. These goods and services are necessary for the project to happen, but they are not related to project management.

Applicants should identify all currently planned contractors (e.g. farmers/other food suppliers, and suppliers of other goods and services) as part of their submitted budget. Grantees may choose to source goods and services from additional contractors beyond those named in their approved budget, but will need to follow the general procurement standards in **2 CFR 200.318** and use their own documented procurement procedures which reflect applicable state and local law and regulations, provided that the requirements conform to applicable federal law and the standards found in **2 CFR 200.318**. Additional information is included in Section 7.0 of the AMS Terms and Conditions and in the **state bidding requirements**.

Grantees must maintain written standards of conduct covering conflicts of interest and governing the actions of its employees engaged in the selection, award, and administration of contracts.

Subrecipients – when delegating project management

Relationships with subrecipients involve paying another entity to manage some programmatic decisions about the project. Projects may include relationships with subrecipients (also referred to as issuing a "subaward" to a subrecipient). It is not a requirement to work with subrecipients. Lead applicants working with subrecipients must have capacity to follow all federal requirements for pass-through entities. Additional information is detailed in **2 CFR 200.332** and Section 3.0 "Subrecipient Monitoring and Management" of the **AMS General Terms and Conditions**; these must be reviewed by anyone proposing a project that involves subrecipients. These include requirements for all subrecipients to obtain their own Unique Entity ID in SAM.gov prior to receiving an official subaward (**2 CFR 25.300**), and requirements for grantees to enter into a formal written agreement with each subrecipient.

An example of a subaward to a subrecipient could include the lead applicant choosing to manage all aspects of food procurement, but paying another entity to handle all aspects of distribution, e.g. paying that entity to make programmatic decisions about how and when food will be distributed, and implementing those distribution plans.

Applicants must identify any subrecipients as a part of their submitted workplan and budget. Grantees interested in issuing a subaward after a contract is in place must request a contract amendment in order to do so. The MDA reserves the right to deny subawards proposed by applicants or grantees.

Additional information on contractors and subrecipients

There are many variables that can influence whether an entity that a grantee is working with is ultimately considered a contractor or subrecipient. Individual judgement is needed. Additional information about distinguishing between subrecipients and contractors is available in **2 CFR 200.331**. Staff may follow up with awardees prior to entering into a grant contract in order to better understand any relationship(s) proposed and how they will be managed.

Grantees must not issue subawards or contract with vendors who are included in Minnesota's Suspended/Debarred Vendor Report or vendors listed on the federal governmentwide exclusions list in SAM.gov

Letters of support

Applications must include letters of support related to the following areas, as applicable:

- Project planning: The application must include letters of support from others involved in the project planning. At least one letter must be from a socially disadvantaged farmer involved in the project planning (unless the lead applicant identifies as a socially disadvantaged farmer and otherwise indicates that in the application).

- Farmers/food suppliers: The application must include a letter(s) of support from any farmer/food supplier (e.g. a food hub) that is proposed in the budget to supply $10,000 or more of eligible food products.

- Subrecipients: If subrecipient relationships are proposed, the application must include a letter of support from any proposed subrecipient. The letter(s) must acknowledge the subrecipient relationship and affirm that the letter-writer understands their proposed role in the project.

Please see **Appendix B** for optional template letters of support related to project planning and farmers/food suppliers. Additional letters of support beyond those requested in this RFP will not be considered or evaluated. See "**Application Evaluation Profile**" for the full scoring criteria.

Eligible Expenses

Project expenses may fall under the four budget categories detailed in the left column of this table. Additional information about these budget categories is detailed in the table and below:

Budget Category	Budget Constraints	Types of Expenses	Example Activities
Food Procurement	Minimum 61.00% of total budget	• Food procurement contracts	• Buying eligible food products from farmers, food hubs, etc.
Food Storage	NA	• Food storage contracts • Materials and supplies directly related to food storage	• Renting space at a local food hub or community center for storage or packing of food • Boxes to support distribution of products (this does not include boxes used in production)
Food Transportation	NA	• Food distribution contracts • Travel costs associated with food transportation • Rental costs of transportation-related equipment	• Contracting with a trucking company to move food from a farm to a food drop location • Delivery expenses charged by a farmer as a separate line item than food costs • Mileage expenses related to food transportation • Vehicle rental for food transportation
Supporting Expenses	Maximum 15% of total budget	• Personnel • Travel • Subawards to subrecipients for other services (not directly related to food procurement, food storage, or food transportation) • Other • Indirect Expenses	• Staff time for the lead applicant organization to make arrangements with farmers / distribution sites, and compile grant reporting • Renting event space to host a mid-project check-in with participating farmers • Mileage for staff to drive to community meetings to promote LFPA food distribution events

All costs must be reasonable, necessary, justifiable, and directly related to the project (except for the indirect cost rate, if applicable). All costs must be allowable as described in section 8.0 of the **AMS General Terms and Conditions**. State, local, or tribal governments, nonprofit organizations, colleges, and universities can fund further guidance on cost principles in **2 Code of Federal Regulations (CFR) 200 Subpart E**. For-profit organizations can find further guidance in **48 CFR Subpart 31.2**.

Food storage

If food storage expenses are included, they must be attributable as a direct expense (e.g. LFPA-specific rental expenses), and only during the time period when storage of LFPA-funded foods is actually taking place. Overhead expenses (i.e. facilities and administrative costs) should be included as part of an indirect rate, if at all.

Supporting Expenses

Personnel

Includes salary and wage costs for individuals employed by the lead applicant, for time spent on the grant project.

- Salaries, wages, and fringe benefits incurred under formally established practices of the organization must be consistently applied, reasonable for the service rendered, and supported with adequate documentation.

- Personnel costs may be considered an expense under the "Supporting Expenses" budget category, but cannot be considered a food procurement/storage/transportation expense. As an example, if staff are spending time transporting product, that time should be considered an expense under "Supporting Expenses." Costs associated with the actual food transportation, e.g., mileage or vehicle rental, should be considered a food transportation expense.

Travel

Includes lodging, mileage, parking, etc., for individuals employed by the lead applicant, if these costs are necessary for grant activities (and not otherwise accounted for on the applicant's budget as part of the "food transportation" budget category).

Grantees must follow their formal organizational policy to limit these costs, as long as the travel policies are in accordance with **2 CFR 200.474** or **48 CFR subpart 31.2** as applicable. If a grantee does not have formal travel policies or is a for-profit entity, allowable travel costs may not exceed those established by the Federal Travel Regulation (FTR) issued by the General Service Administration, including the maximum per diem and subsistence rates prescribed in those regulations.

Other

Includes, but is not limited to, the following types of expenses not otherwise accounted for in the "food transportation" or "food storage" budget categories. Additional information about eligibility is included in Section 8.0 of the AMS Terms and Conditions:

- Materials and supplies
- Equipment rentals
- Printing and publications
- Participant support costs
- Contractual/consultant costs (for buying of goods and services that will be performed by entities other than the lead applicant, but not through a subaward)
- Space rentals (such as for hosting planning/outreach meetings directly related to LFPA)
- Insurance, such as product liability insurance (if directly related to the LFPA project, and not pre-existing)

Indirect costs

Indirect costs are costs that cannot be readily identified with an individual project, program, or organizational activity. They generally include facilities operation and maintenance costs, depreciation, and administrative expenses. If your organization has a federal NICRA (Negotiated Indirect Cost Rate Agreement), you should use the indirect rate specified in the agreement, and a copy of the NICRA must be submitted with the application. Otherwise, applicants may opt to charge up to 10% of modified total direct costs (MTDC) (often referred to as the de minimis rate). The MTDC are defined in **2 CFR 200.1** as all direct salaries and wages, applicable fringe benefits, materials and supplies, services, travel, and up to the first $25,000 of each subaward. There may be elements of food storage and transportation that fall within that definition. The indirect rate may not be charged against the costs of food, regardless of whether the food was purchased by the grantee or through a subrecipient. The MTDC also exclude equipment, capital expenditures, rental costs, participant support costs, among other costs. See Section 8.1 of the AMS General Terms and Conditions for further guidance.

Budget Template

Applicants are required to use the budget template provided in **Appendix C**.

Ineligible Expenses

Ineligible expenses include but are not limited to:

- Expenditures incurred before contract execution.

- Acquisition costs of general-purpose equipment or lease agreements to own (i.e., lease-to-own, or rent-to-own). This means that expenses such as vehicle or cold storage purchases are ineligible.

- Production costs, such as food safety certifications, training, seed, crop insurance, or general-purpose development or training.

- Foods considered "fully processed," including but not limited to: bacon; ham/ham hocks; Italian sausage; hot dogs; brats significant seasoning and/or added ingredients such as cheese or wild rice; jam; cheese or yogurt with added flavorings; kimchi; tortillas; breads, muffins, or crackers; prepackaged sandwiches or meals; other prepared and/or pre-cooked items that come ready-to-eat or that require no further preparation beyond heating (e.g. chicken nuggets, fish sticks, pre-made pizzas, etc.).

- Live animals.

- Expenses associated with educational sessions (e.g. cooking demos) for food recipients.

- Farm tours conducted for the purpose of relationship development between farmers and food recipients.

- Food distributed through schools as part of the National School Lunch Program.

- Business license and registration costs.

- Donated or volunteer (in-kind) services. While these may be furnished to an applicant by professional and technical personnel, consultants, and other skilled and unskilled labor, the value of these services is not an eligible cost.

- Donations and in-kind contributions, including property and services, made by the applicant (regardless of the recipient).

- Fines, penalties, and other settlement expenses resulting from failure of the applicant to comply with federal, state, local, or Indian tribal laws and regulations.

- Fundraising, including financial campaigns, solicitation of gifts and bequests, and similar expenses incurred to raise capital or obtain contributions.

- Political activities in accordance with provisions of the Hatch Act (**5 United State Code 1501-1508** and **7324-7326**).

- Taxes, except sales tax on goods and services.

- Lobbyists and political contributions.

- Bad debts, late payment fees, finance charges, legal costs, or contingency funds.

- Parking or traffic violations.

- Unallowable costs as described in **Section 8.2 of the AMS General Terms and Conditions**.

Matching Funds Not Required

There is no cost-sharing or matching requirement and there is no competitive advantage to applicants that provide a match.

DEFINITIONS

The following definitions apply to this grant. These terms may have different definitions in other contexts.

Socially disadvantaged farmers: Refers to farmers or ranchers who are 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.

Food waste prevention: Refers to efforts to minimize the overproduction of food, preventing food from going to waste in the field, and/or successfully connecting food to human consumers. Food waste prevention does not include the feeding of food to animals and/or composting.

Local and regional food: Food that is raised, produced, aggregated, stored, processed, and distributed in the locality or region where the final product is marketed to consumers, so that the total distance that the product travels between the farm or ranch where the product originates and the point of sale to the end consumer is at most 400 miles, or both the final market and the origin of the product are within the same State, territory, or tribal land.

Underserved communities: Refers to populations sharing a particular characteristic, as well as geographic communities, that have been systematically denied a full opportunity to participate in aspects of economic, social, and civic life. This includes Black, Latino, and Indigenous and Native American persons, Asian Americans and Pacific Islanders and other persons of color; members of religious minorities; LGBTQ+ persons; persons with disabilities; persons who live in rural areas; and, persons otherwise adversely affected by persistent poverty or inequality.

Unprocessed or minimally processed: Examples of allowable food products include fruits and vegetables (including 100% juices); grain products such as pastas and rice; meats (whole, pieces, or food items such as ground meats); meat alternates such as beans or legumes; and, fluid milk and other dairy foods such as cheese and yogurt. Foods in a wide variety of minimal processing states (e.g., whole, cut, pureed, etc.) and/or forms (e.g., fresh, frozen, canned, dried, etc.) are also allowable.

Grant reporting and project evaluation are required to process reimbursements to grantees and help determine the long-term impacts of the grant. This grant provides reimbursement of allowable costs on a quarterly basis. In addition to reporting and evaluation during the grant period, grantees are required to respond to requests for follow-up information for three years beyond the term of the grant agreement. Failure to respond to these in a timely manner may impact your ability to secure future funding from the MDA.

Grant Reporting

What: Grantees are required to submit quarterly reports and assist in year-end data verification. Each quarterly report serves as the grantee's request for reimbursement for the previous quarter, in addition to collecting data on food procurement and distribution activities. All allowable expenses must be submitted with proof of purchase and proof of payment, unless otherwise specified. Additionally, a review of year-end summary data are required by the State of Minnesota and the USDA. These quarterly reports and year-end reviews will gather quantitative data (i.e. numbers) and details about the farmers providing food for each project. This information is classified as public data. Please see **Appendix D** for an example of the information required in each quarterly report and **Appendix C** for additional information about proof of purchase and proof of payment documents.

Why: These reports are required by the USDA and the MDA to measure project administration and goals including the total amount of money spent on local food procurement and distribution; total number of farmers supported, including socially disadvantaged farmers; and the total number of underserved communities receiving the food.

How: Grantees will submit reports via email. Required templates will be provided by the MDA. MDA staff will be available to answer questions about the template as requested.

When: Reporting will be due on the following timeline:

Due Date	Reporting Range	Type of Report
October 10, 2024	July 1, 2024 – September 30, 2024	Quarterly report (data and expenses) and year-end data verification
January 10, 2025	October 1, 2024 – December 31, 2024	Quarterly report (data and expenses)
April 10, 2025	January 1, 2025 – March 31, 2025	Quarterly report (data and expenses)
July 10, 2025	April 1, 2025 - June 30, 2025	Quarterly report (data and expenses)
October 31, 2025	July 1, 2025 – September 14, 2025	Quarterly report (data and expenses) and year-end data verification

Project Evaluation

What: Grantees are required to participate in an overall project evaluation to help the MDA demonstrate the impact of these funds and identify areas for improvement and development. Project evaluation will focus on the following topic areas.

- Evaluation of each grantee's individual project. For example, assessing additional infrastructure needed to support this kind of work and relationships that are made because of this funding.

- Evaluation of how information about the MN LFPA grant should be shared publicly, including the type and kind of data that is available and how it can be accessed.

- Evaluation of the state administration of MN LFPA funds and how well the MDA supports grantees in their individual projects and grant administration.

- Evaluation to assess farmers' experience producing food for these projects and overall impacts to farm businesses. Grantees will be asked to support this evaluation through recruitment of farmers and logistics of planning farmer engagement.

Why: An evaluation will be conducted to determine the impact LFPA has in communities across Minnesota in a way that can make a case for ongoing funding and development for local food procurement and distribution.

How: Grantees will be required to participate in a project evaluation cohort. This cohort will be managed by MDA staff and will meet two times during the grant period.

When: Project evaluation will take place on the following timeline:

Date	Purpose	Format
Fall 2024	Cohort kick off and project sharing	Facilitated discussion with all grantees to learn how projects are evolving and connect with other grantees.
Spring 2025	Project check-in	Facilitated discussion with all grantees to check in on projects and connect with other grantees.
Late summer 2025	Final cohort gathering	Facilitated discussion with all grantees and a celebration of success.

APPLICATION REVIEW POLICIES

Review Process

A review committee, composed of external reviewers and facilitated by MDA staff, will evaluate all eligible applications based on the criteria in the **Application Evaluation Profile**. MDA staff will also complete an administrative review to ensure that all aspects of a proposal follow program rules and regulations. The MDA reserves the right to waive minor irregularities or request additional information to further clarify or validate application information, provided the application, as submitted, substantially complies with the requirements of this RFP. There is, however, no guarantee the MDA will look for information or clarification outside of the submitted application. Therefore, it is important that all applicants ensure that all sections of their application are complete.

Reviewers may recommend whole or partial funding of a project. The Commissioner of Agriculture reviews the committee recommendations and is responsible for final award recommendations. The review committee and commissioner may use the level of inclusion of socially disadvantaged farmers, rural/urban, geographic distribution, services to prioritized populations, applicant's history as a state grantee (including status as a current LFPA grantee), and capacity to perform the work when making recommendations. Recommended applicants are subject to approval by the USDA. The MDA will notify applicants, both successful and unsuccessful, in writing. Applicants may request a summary of reviewer comments.

External grant reviewers are being solicited through an open call process. Additional information is available **on our website**.

Conflicts of Interest

State grant policy requires that steps and procedures are in place to prevent individual and organizational conflicts of interest, both in reference to applicants and reviewers, per **Minn. Stat.16B.98** and **Conflict of Interest Policy for State Grant-Making, 2022 (Word)**.

Organizational conflicts of interest occur when:

- A grantee or applicant is unable or potentially unable to render impartial assistance or advice to the MDA due to competing duties or loyalties.

- A grantee's or applicant's objectivity in carrying out the grant is or might be otherwise impaired due to competing duties or loyalties.

In cases where a conflict of interest is suspected, disclosed, or discovered, the applicants or grantees will be notified and actions may be pursued, including but not limited to disqualification from eligibility for the grant award or termination of the grant agreement.

Privacy Notice and Data Classification

The information provided by an applicant will be used to assess the applicant's eligibility to receive a grant. The decision to apply for this grant is voluntary, and applicants are not legally required to provide any of the requested information. Applicants may decline to complete this application without any legal consequence. However, only completed applications will be considered for a grant; incomplete applications will not be considered.

Data provided in this application is initially classified by the Minnesota Data Practices Act as private or nonpublic, although some or all the data will generally become public at various points of the application process unless the data is otherwise classified by state or federal law. Access to private or nonpublic data is limited to those authorized by law, including but not necessarily limited to MDA staff and contractors with a valid work assignment to access the data, parties authorized by the applicant, parties identified in a valid court order or federal subpoena, Minnesota Management and Budget, Minnesota Department of Administration, the state auditor, and the legislative auditor. If necessary, the MDA may also share the data with law enforcement or the Office of the Attorney General.

Per Minnesota's statute on grants (**Minn. Stat. 13.599**):

- Names and addresses of grant applicants, and the grant amount requested, will be public data once application responses are opened.

- All remaining data in application responses (except for data otherwise classified by law, including trade secret information, see below) becomes public data after the evaluation process is completed (for the purposes of this grant, when all grant agreements have been fully executed).

- All data created or maintained by the MDA as part of the evaluation process (except trade secret information, see below) will be public data after the evaluation process is completed.

Procedure for claiming protection of trade secrets:

Trade secret information is classified as not public data. In order to qualify as trade secret information, the data in question must be provided to the MDA by the affected person (i.e. the data must be about the applicant) and otherwise meet the legal definition found in statute (**Minn. Stat. § 13.37, subd. 1(b)**). In order for an applicant to assert trade secret protection for data submitted as part of this application, the applicant must: 1) clearly identify the specific formula, pattern, compilation, program, device, method, technique or process that the applicant believes to be trade secret information; 2) describe what efforts the applicant takes to maintain the secrecy of the data; and, 3) adequately explain how the data derive(s) independent economic value from not being generally known to, and not readily ascertainable by proper means by, other persons. Merely asserting trade secret protection does not, in and of itself, classify the data in question as not public; determining what data meet the definition of trade secret information is ultimately the legal responsibility of the MDA, and the MDA cannot guarantee that data identified as trade secret information by an applicant will be classified as such. If the MDA determines that data do not meet the definition of trade secret information, the data in question will be available to the public unless the applicant secures a court order saying otherwise.

All persons, organizations, or corporations applying for grants in the State of Minnesota must comply with applicable laws. Under **Minn. Stat. § 270C.65, Subd. 3** , a grantee consents to disclosure of its social security number, federal employer tax identification number, and/or Minnesota tax identification number, already provided to the state, to federal and state tax agencies, and to state personnel involved in the payment of state obligations. These identification numbers may be used in the enforcement of federal and state tax laws which could result in action requiring the grantee to file state tax returns and pay delinquent state tax liabilities, if any.

ADDITIONAL REQUIREMENTS FOR GRANT RECIPIENTS

Pre-Award Risk Assessment

During the 2023 legislative session, the Minnesota Legislature adopted new grant administration provisions (**Laws of Minnesota 2023, chapter 62, article 7, section 11**). The MDA reserves the right to adjust these pre-award financial review requirements as implementation details are being determined.

If the MDA determines that the awardee has substantial financial risks that inhibit its ability to perform the required duties under the grant contract agreement, then the MDA may either request more information for the purpose of satisfying the concerns, develop a risk mitigation plan (including applying specific award conditions) to protect the interests of the state, or not award the grant.

In accordance with the State Office of Grants Management **Policy 08-06: Policy on Pre-Award Risk Assessment for Potential Grantees (PDF)** and federal requirements for risk assessment, applicants will be asked to submit documents relevant to their entity, as described below. In addition, if an applicant expends more than $750,000 per year in federal funds, the organization's single audit will be reviewed from the **Federal Audit Clearinghouse** or provided by the grantee.

Nonprofit organizations

Documents asked for may include:

- A copy of the non-profit's most recent Form 990 or Form 990-EZ with the Internal Revenue Service. If the non-profit has not been in existence long enough or is not required to file Form 990 or Form 990-EZ, then they must submit the following information:
  - Proof of its tax-exempt status
  - Most recent board-reviewed financial statements
  - Documentation of its internal controls
- Most recent certified financial audit if required to complete one under Section 309.53, Subd. 3.
- Confirmation that it is in good standing with the Office of the Secretary of State.
- Confirmation that it is registered with the Minnesota Attorney General's Office, unless otherwise exempt.
- Confirmation that none of its current board members or staff with authority to access grant funds have been convicted of a felony financial crime in the last 10 years.

Non-profit grantees that are not in good standing with the Minnesota Secretary of State and appropriately registered with the Attorney General's Office are not eligible to receive grant contract agreements unless approved by the MDA.

For-profit businesses

Documents asked for may include:

- A copy of the business' most recent federal and state tax returns. If the business has not been in business long enough to have a tax return, then they must submit current financial statements and documentation of internal controls.
- Confirmation that the business entity is not under bankruptcy proceedings or have any liens on assets.
- Confirmation that the business is in good standing with the Office of the Secretary of State.
- Confirmation that none of its current board members or staff with authority to access grant funds have been convicted of a felony financial crime in the last ten years.

All for-profit businesses selected for a grant award over $100,000 must submit either a **Form REV 185i (PDF)** or **Form**

REV185b (PDF) at the time of grant award notification. These forms give the Minnesota Department of Revenue permission to inform the MDA if the grantee owes any back taxes.

Political sub-divisions

All political sub-divisions selected for a grant award must undergo a financial review prior to receiving a grant contract agreement.

To comply with Policy 08-06, applicants must confirm that none of its current public officials, board members, or staff with authority to access grant funds have been convicted of a felony financial crime in the last ten years.

Individuals

Individuals will need to certify that they have not been convicted of a felony financial crime related to a state grant contract agreement.

All individuals selected for a grant award over $100,000 must submit either a Form **REV 185i (PDF)** or Form **REV185b (PDF)** at the time of grant award notification (see the **for-profit businesses** section). These forms give the Minnesota Department of Revenue permission to inform the MDA if the grantee owes any back taxes.

Grant Award Agreement

Grant contract agreement templates are available for review at **Office of Grants Management Policies, Statutes, and Forms/Forms and FAQs tab**.

Upon approval of an application and prior to starting work on the grant project and receiving reimbursements, the applicant is required to do the following:

- Register as a vendor in SWIFT, the state's accounting system, or confirm that information associated with an existing registration in SWIFT is still correct, and
- Submit financial paperwork as necessary for a "**Pre-Award Risk Assessment**," and
- Sign a **conflict of interest** disclosure statement, and
- For grant contracts of $100,000 (or over), update or obtain a **Workforce Certificate from the Minnesota Department of Human Rights or declare an exemption**, and
- Submit other required documentation within 30 days of award notification.

After the applicable documentation is reviewed and approved, but prior to starting work on the grant project and receiving reimbursements, the applicant must also:

- Sign a Grant Contract Agreement indicating their intention to complete the proposed tasks. The agreement also authorizes the MDA to monitor the progress of the project. The grant award document must be signed within 30 days of being sent to the grantee.

Eligible expenses may only be incurred after the contract has been signed by all parties. Applicants should anticipate having a grant contract that will end on or before September 14, 2025.

Payments

Reimbursements

Payments will be made to grantees as reimbursements on a quarterly basis. Grantee requests for reimbursement are submitted as part of the grantee's quarterly **grant reporting**, and must correspond to the approved grant budget. To receive grant payments, grantees must provide proof of purchase and proof of payment for all expenses, unless otherwise specified. Please see **Appendix C** for more information on proof of purchase and proof of payment documentation. Grant payments shall not be made on grants with past due quarterly or annual reports unless the MDA has given the grantee a written extension.

Advances

Applicants can request up to 50% of their yearly project budget (i.e. 50% of the project budget for 2024, and if applicable, 50% of the project budget for 2025) to be issued via advances. If approved for advance payments, advance funding will be split into multiple payments based on risk mitigation measures implemented as part of the pre-award risk assessment. **You must indicate in the Budget Section of the application if you are requesting advance funds and provide a justification for the request**.

The MDA reserves the right to not honor requests for advanced payments, including if an organization has an existing open grant with the MDA. Applicants must have an operating and financial history in order to be assessed for advance payments. Note that any cash advance that violates the terms of the grant agreement or does not adequately support the approved project must be repaid. Additional advance payments will not be made until previous advanced payments have been accounted for. Grantees that are approved for advance payments will work with MDA staff to split out their advance fund requests into funding for food purchases and funding for all other expenses.

Monitoring Visits

The grant agreement allows the MDA to monitor the progress of the project. The MDA will perform a monitoring visit for all grantees with awards of $25,000 or more before a final payment is approved and other monitoring visits may be conducted at the discretion of the MDA. These monitoring visits will be conducted in-person when possible.

Affirmative Action and Non-Discrimination Policy

The grantee agrees not to discriminate against any employee or applicant for employment because of race, color, creed, religion, national origin, sex, marital status, status in regard to public assistance, membership or activity in a local commission, disability, sexual orientation, or age in regard to any position for which the employee or applicant for employment is qualified (**Minn. Stat. 363A.02**). The grantee agrees to take affirmative steps to employ, advance in employment, upgrade, train, and recruit minority persons, women, and persons with disabilities.

The grantee must not discriminate against any employee or applicant for employment because of physical or mental disability regarding any position for which the employee or applicant for employment is qualified. The grantee agrees to take affirmative action to employ, advance in employment, and otherwise treat qualified disabled persons without discrimination based upon their physical or mental disability in all employment practices such as the following: employment, upgrading, demotion or transfer, recruitment, advertising, layoff or termination, rates of pay or other forms of compensation, and selection for training, including apprenticeship (**Minnesota Rules, part 5000.3500**).

The grantee agrees to comply with the rules and relevant orders of the Minnesota Department of Human Rights issued pursuant to the **Minnesota Human Rights Act** as well as the **federal civil rights law and USDA civil rights regulations and policies**.

Audits of Project

Per **2 CFR 200.334** and **Minn. Stat. 16B.98, subdivision 8**, the grantee's books, records, documents, and accounting procedures and practices of the grantee or other party that are relevant to the grant or transaction are subject to examination by the granting agency and either the legislative auditor or the state auditor, or the Federal awarding agency, Inspectors General, the Comptroller General of the United States, as appropriate. This requirement will last for a minimum of six years from the grant agreement end date, receipt, and approval of all final reports, or the required period to satisfy all state and program retention requirements, whichever is later.

Voter Registration Requirement

The grantee will comply with **Minn. Stat. 201.162** by providing voter registration services for its employees. This requirement applies only to government entities and nonprofit organizations.

Evaluation Area: Previous Grantee status (15 possible points)

The lead applicant has previously received a MN LFPA grant	Yes (0 points)	No (15 points)

Evaluation Area: Relationships and Context (36 possible points)

Criteria	High Score	Medium Score	Low Score
Is context provided for the proposal in relation to the applicant's existing work?	Proposal clearly identifies whether food procurement and/or distribution is a part of the applicant's existing work. If yes, the proposal clearly represents an increase or expansion of that work. If no, the proposal provides clear context for the project. (6)	Proposal identifies whether food procurement and/or distribution is an existing part of the applicant's work. If yes, the proposal potentially represents an increase or expansion of that work, but not definitively. If no, the proposal provides some context for the project. (3)	Proposal does not provide sufficient detail to determine whether the project represents an increase or expansion of work, or place the project in context. OR proposal does not represent an increase or expansion of existing procurement and/or distribution work (if applicable). (1)
How well does the project define the community where the work will happen?	Project defines community AND there is clear alignment between those producing the food and those receiving it. (6)	Project defines community but doesn't describe or form alignment between those producing the food and those receiving it. (3)	Project minimally defines community. (1)
How well does the proposal development process reflect the building and sharing of power?	Project addresses power dynamics AND names specific actions to change them. (6)	Project addresses power dynamics but doesn't name specific actions to change them. (3)	Project minimally addresses power dynamics. (1)
How well do the sourcing and distribution plans proposed reflect the building and/or sharing of power?	Project reflects the building/ sharing of power in sourcing AND distribution plans. (6)	Project reflects the building/ sharing of in sourcing OR distribution plans. (3)	Project plans for sourcing and distribution do not reflect the building/sharing of power in sourcing or distribution plans. (1)
How well has the project demonstrated opportunities for building sustainable relationships within their community?	Project demonstrates how work will strengthen community relationships, support community foods planning, AND identifies how work will create pathways for additional long-term market opportunities. (6)	Project demonstrates how work will strengthen community relationships and support community foods planning. (3)	Project minimally demonstrates how work will strengthen community relationships. (1)
How well do the letters of support meet the minimum requirements, illustrate the sharing of power, and reflect the entities involved in project planning?	Letters of support meet the minimum requirements, illustrate sharing of power reflected in the project proposal, and reflect entities that are involved in the project planning. (6)	Letters of support meet the minimum requirements but do not clearly illustrate sharing of power reflected in the project proposal or reflect entities that are involved in the project planning. (3)	Letters of support do not meet the minimum requirements. (0)

Evaluation Area: Outcomes (24 possible points)

Criteria	High Score	Medium Score	Low Score
How well does the project demonstrate food purchasing from socially disadvantaged farmers?	Project plans to purchase all or nearly all (90 – 100%) of food from socially disadvantaged farmers. (9)	Project plans to purchase a great deal (80 – 89%) of food from socially disadvantaged farmers. (5)	Project plans to purchase 70 – 79% of food from socially disadvantaged farmers. (1)
Does the project establish new sources of food or food products?	Most (75 – 100%) sources of food OR food products in the project are new. (5)	Project establishes some (50 – 74%) new sources of food OR food products. (3)	Project establishes few (0 – 49%) new sources of food OR food products. (1)
Does the project distribute food to underserved communities?	Project distributes nearly all the food (95 – 100%) to underserved communities. (5)	Project distributes a great deal of food (85 – 94%) to underserved communities. (3)	Project distributes 75 – 84% of food to underserved communities. (1)
Does the project distribute to new recipients of food?	Project distributes nearly all food (95-100%) to new underserved recipients. (5)	Project distribute a great deal of food (85-94%) to new underserved recipients. (3)	Project distributes some food (75-84%) to new underserved recipients. (1)

Evaluation Area: Waste Prevention (5 possible points)

Criteria	High Score (5)	Medium Score (3)	Low Score (0)
How well does the project address food waste prevention?	Project includes planning for food waste prevention during production AND distribution.	Project includes planning for food waste prevention during production OR distribution.	Project has minimal or no planning for food waste prevention.

Evaluation Area: Food Safety (5 possible points)

Criteria	High Score (5)	Medium Score (3)	Low Score (0)
How well does the project address food safety training and implementation?	At least one individual associated with the project has completed relevant food safety training AND the project has systems in place to monitor and control food safety risks.	At least one individual associated with the project has completed relevant food safety training OR conducts at least one food safety practice relevant to product(s).	No food safety training or food safety practice implementation.

Evaluation Area: Work Plan (5 possible points)

Criteria	High Score (5)	Medium Score (3)	Low Score (0)
Does the project work plan timeline include key elements related to procurement and distribution?	Project work plan clearly identifies timeline and key activities related to procurement and distribution.	Project work plan includes some timing elements and key activities related to procurement and distribution.	Project work plan includes minimal or no timing elements or key activities related to procurement and distribution.

Evaluation Area: Budget (10 possible points)

Criteria	High Score (10)	Medium Score (5)	Low Score (0)
How well does the project budget comply with the MN LFPA required budget distribution categories and explain how planned expenses support the overall LFPA grant program goals?	Project budget fully complies with all LFPA budget category distribution AND clearly explains how all planned expenses support overall LFPA grant goals.	Project budget fully complies with all LFPA budget category distribution but does not address how some planned expenses support overall LFPA grant goals.	Project budget does not fully comply with all LFPA budget category distribution AND/OR does not address how planned expenses support overall LFPA grant goals.

MN LFPA Total Maximum Score = 100 points

These questions are provided for your reference. Applicants will answer these questions in the **MDA's online application system** or in a paper application (available by request).

CONTACT INFORMATION

Applicant Information

- Project name

- Name of the individual completing the application

- Organization name (if applicable)

- Mailing address for the organization (if applicable), or individual (if not). Include street address, city, state, and zip code.

- Which of the following statements is true regarding your Unique Entity ID? (A Unique Entity ID is assigned by the federal System for Award Management (SAM) and is a 12-character alphanumeric value. It is not a Tax ID, EIN, or Social Security number. See the "**Eligible Applicants**" section of the RFP for additional information.)

  ☐ I have a Unique Entity ID in place. (Include that ID if true.)

  ☐ I have started the process to obtain a Unique Entity ID. (Include a copy of documentation demonstrating this if true.)

Authorized Representative

Please provide the name of the person who will sign the MN LFPA contract agreement for the organization above, if awarded a grant. This person must be authorized to sign contracts on behalf of the organization.

- Name
- Title
- Telephone
- Email

Additional Point of Contact

If there is an additional person affiliated with the applicant organization who is authorized to receive correspondence about the application and grant (e.g. the individual submitting the application if different than the authorized representative, or another staff tasked with project management), please provide that person's contact information.

- Name
- Title
- Telephone
- Email

Type of Applicant

Previous MN LPFA grant recipient? (Yes/No)

Please indicate the type of applicant that is applying:

☐ Individual

☐ Non-profit organization

☐ For-profit organization

☐ City/county/state government

☐ Tribal nation

☐ Other: Please describe _____

ELIGIBILITY

Please confirm that the following statements are true:

- The organization is in good standing with the state of Minnesota. (No back taxes are owed, no defaults have occurred on Minnesota state-backed financing for the past seven years, applicant is in compliance with current state regulations, and applicant has had acceptable performance on past MDA grants.) (Yes/No)

- I attest that I have the authority to apply on behalf of the organization.

- The organization is located in Minnesota. (Yes/No)

- The lead applicant is not an employee or spouse of an employee of the MDA. (Yes/No)

- At least 70% of food purchased (by monetary value) will come from within Minnesota. (Yes/No)

- Food will be distributed at no cost, without conditions for the end-users. (Yes/No)

- I understand that the MDA is unable to reimburse any work performed prior to the start date of the contract. (Yes/No)

PROJECT OVERVIEW

Grant Request

- Total grant funds requested. (Maximum $125,000, minimum $20,000.)

- Expected project start date.
  - Must be after the contract is signed by you **and** the state of Minnesota.

- Expected project end date.
  - Contracts will end on or before September 14, 2025.
  - You will have up to one month after your contract end date to submit expenses for reimbursement.

- Region(s) your project will purchase food from. (Check all that apply.)

  ☐ Northwest Minnesota   ☐ Southwest Minnesota

  ☐ Northeast Minnesota   ☐ Southeast Minnesota

  ☐ West Central Minnesota   ☐ Outside of Minnesota state boundaries, per the definition

  ☐ Twin Cities Metro   of local and regional food

- Region(s) your project will distribute food in. (Check all that apply.)

  ☐ Northwest Minnesota   ☐ Twin Cities Metro

  ☐ Northeast Minnesota   ☐ Southwest Minnesota

  ☐ West Central Minnesota   ☐ Southeast Minnesota

Project Description

Projects must purchase and distribute food or facilitate these activities. Provide a brief description of your project outlining what you plan to complete and how you will work with socially disadvantaged farmers and underserved communities. Limit your description to 1 – 3 sentences. If awarded, this will be used to share information about your project with the public. (500 characters, including spaces)

PROJECT NARRATIVE

Relationships and Context

Existing Work

Is food procurement and/or distribution an existing part of your work?

- If yes, please describe how your proposal will expand or increase your existing programs. Include specifics such as increased number of farm business suppliers, diversification of products purchased, and/or changes to your distribution locations. (As noted in the "Eligible Projects" section of the RFP, if proposing to fund an existing effort, projects must supplement (i.e., increase or expand) existing food procurement and food distribution activities.)

- If no, please describe how your proposal fits into your organization's existing overall scope of work or represents an intentional change.

(Max 1,000 characters, including spaces)

Community

Please explain your definition of community. Is it geographic, cultural, etc.? How will this project support distribution of food that is produced within the community? *(Max 2,000 characters, including spaces)*

Building and Sharing Power

Please describe steps your project is taking to intentionally build and/or share power with populations that haven't historically had power. Please include discussion of the following, as applicable:

- How was the project proposal developed? Who was involved in decision-making for the application, and how do they represent the identified community? How does the proposal meet collaboratively identified needs?

- How do you plan to source food? Does this build and/or share power with farmers? How will food be distributed? Does this include expanding beyond the traditional emergency food/hunger relief distribution structures?

 (Max 3,000 characters, including spaces)

Sustainability

What opportunities will this project present for developing long-term local food sourcing, purchasing, and distribution in your community? What relationships, long-term market opportunities, and food distribution networks may be created that can outlast this grant funding? *(Max 2,000 characters, including spaces)*

Letters of Support

Provide letters of support related to the following areas: project planning, farmers/food suppliers, and subrecipients (if applicable). Please see the "Letters of Support" section of the RFP for additional information about the letters required. Optional templates for these letters of support are in **Appendix B**.

As noted in the **Application Evaluation Profile**, these letters will be evaluated not on quantity but based on whether they meet the minimum requirements stated in the RFP, and the degree to which they illustrate the sharing of power and represent entities involved in the project planning.

Food Waste Prevention

How do you plan to support the prevention of wasted food? Describe any steps taken during production and distribution as applicable. Food waste prevention in this case includes minimizing the overproduction of food, preventing food from going to waste in the field, and/or successfully connecting food to human consumers. Food waste prevention does not include the feeding of food to animals and/or composting. *(Max 1,000 characters, including spaces)*

Food Safety

Describe how the applicant and/or others involved have addressed food safety in relation to this project. Has at least one individual associated with this project completed relevant food safety training? If yes, which training? Describe food safety practices followed and any systems that are in place to monitor and control for food safety. *(Max 1,000 characters, including spaces)*

OUTCOMES

Farm Businesses

Socially disadvantaged farm businesses include farmers of color; American Indian or Alaskan Native farmers; women; farmers with disabilities; LGBTQIA+ farmers and other farmers that meet the definition provided in the RFP.

Please identify the total number of farm businesses that you plan to work with in this project (including your own if you are a farmer): _____

Please identify the % of all food purchasing funds that will be directed towards farm businesses that identify as socially disadvantaged: _____% (minimum 70%)

Of the total number of farm businesses:

- What percent of those farms are new sources of food or new relationships for one or more of the applicant and/or distribution locations? _____%
- What percent are providing new food products for the applicant and/or food distribution network involved in the project? _____%

Food Distribution to Communities

Please identify the total number of distribution locations that this project plans to serve: _____

Of the total number of distribution locations:

- What percent of those locations are new for the applicant and/or food distribution networks involved in the project? _____%
- Please identify the % of the total number of distribution locations that meet the definition of underserved communities _____% (minimum 75%)

PROJECT PLAN

For purposes of the workplan and budget, a project start date of July 2024 is proposed. The expected project end date is September 14, 2025, or earlier if desired.

Work Plan Timeline

Include a timeline of milestones for your project that states, at a minimum, months and key activities planned. These key activities should relate to overall LFPA program goals for procurement and distribution, including work with others as applicable. The timeline will be used to evaluate high level progress of projects. It can be helpful to include discrete, measurable goals, and to allow some space for adjustments in timing.

An optional template is available in **Appendix E**. Submitted work plans that use other formatting besides those provided on the optional template must include the same elements included on the MDA template.

Budget

Include a budget for your project that states, at a minimum, all major planned expenses. If you have costs associated with each of the various budget categories (food procurement, food storage, food transportation, supporting expenses), costs

must be identified with their associated category and each of those costs must be itemized. If you do not have costs in a certain budget category, that category does not need to be included in your budget.

If specific farmers/food suppliers are named in the application as providing more than $10,000 worth of food, these contractors would need to submit a letter of support for the project.

A required template is available in **Appendix C**.

Budget Narrative

Justify your budget and explain how the stated expenses support the overall project work. (2,000 characters, including spaces)

- Explain how your planned expenses directly support buying local food, particularly from socially disadvantaged farmers, and distributing it to underserved communities.
- Explain how the costs stated in your budget help you meet the milestones and goals included in your project timeline.

Advances

As described in the "Payments" section of the RFP, applicants must request advance funds in this section of the application and undergo financial review to be approved for advance payments. Grant payments will otherwise be issued on a reimbursement basis.

Are you requesting advance funds? (Yes/No)

Advance Funds Requested

If you are requesting advance funds, please provide estimated grant project expenditures for each calendar year during the grant period, and the percentage you are requesting as advances. If approved, advance amounts will be rounded to the nearest whole numbers.

- Year 1, summer 2024 to December 2024:
  - Provide the total estimated expenditures for Year 1 ($)
  - What percentage of your total budget for year 1 (up to 50%) are you requesting as advances? (%)
- Year 2, January 2025– September 14, 2025 (if applicable): ($)
  - Provide the total estimated expenditures for Year 2 ($)
  - What percentage of your total budget for year 2 (up to 50%) are you requesting as advances? (%)

Advance Funds Justification

If you are requesting advance funds, please explain your need for upfront funding. (500 characters, including spaces)

The expected grant outcomes for Minnesota's LFPA funds are below. The language for these outcomes and indicators was developed by USDA, with the exception of outcome numbers 2b and 4. The estimated numbers for all indicators were supplied by the MDA to USDA following public feedback.

Outcome 1: Provide an opportunity for states and tribal organizations to strengthen their local and regional food system and to support local and socially disadvantaged farmers/producers through building and expanding economic opportunities.

Indicator	Description	Estimated Number
1.a.	Total number of local producers/vendors that are expected to participate in the program.	200
1.b.	Of the number in 1.a., the number of producers/vendors that are socially disadvantaged.	140
1.c.	Total dollars expected to be expended to purchase local and regional food through this program.	$4.3 million
1.d.	Of the number in 1.c., how many dollars will be expended to purchase food from socially disadvantaged producers/vendors?	$3.01 million

Outcome 2: Establish and broaden partnerships with farmers/producers and the food distribution community to ensure distribution of fresh and nutritious foods to underserved communities.

Indicator	Description	Estimated Dollars	Estimated Number
2.a.	Provide an estimate of total number of dollars expected to be expended.	$4.3 million	
2.b.	Of the numbers in 2.a., provide an estimate of total number of dollars expected to be expended to underserved communities.	$3.01 million	
2.c.	Provide an estimate of the number of locations expected to distribute food.		30
2.d.	Of the locations in 2.c., how many do you expect to be to underserved communities?		23

Outcome 3: Final Report – Program Outcomes

1. Percentage of new marketing opportunities established by purchasing from local and regional farmers/producers, and of those, what percentage will likely be sustained after the funding is expended.

   Goal: 66% of purchases from local and regional farmers/producers will result in new marketing opportunities and 20% of these opportunities will likely be sustained after the funding is expended.

2. Percentage of new marketing opportunities established by purchasing from socially disadvantaged farmers/producers, and of those, what percentage will likely be sustained after the funding is expended.

   Goal: 66% of purchases from socially disadvantaged farmers/producers will result in new marketing opportunities, and 20% will likely be sustained after the funding is expended.

   Goal: 50% of socially disadvantaged farmers have formal agreements established to demonstrate reliable product delivery and financial management.

3. Percentage of purchases distributed beyond current food distribution networks to serve underserved communities, and of those, what percentage will likely be sustained after the funding is expended.

   Goal: 66% of purchases will be distributed beyond current food distribution networks to serve underserved communities, and 20% of purchases for these new distribution networks will likely be sustained after funding is expended.

Outcome 4: Minnesota Program Specific Outcomes

Indicator	Description	Estimated Number
4.a.	Awardees can easily submit reports in a timely and efficient way including their assessment of additional infrastructure needs.	170
4.b.	Quantitative and qualitative data that demonstrates the effectiveness, and shares lessons learned on the process of public engagement.	60
4.c	Applicants, final grant awardees, and participating farmers will be asked to voluntarily share demographic data. Analysis of these data will be used to demonstrate how the LFPA program impacts specific populations, including those considered emerging and socially disadvantaged farmers.	230

Please see the "**Letters of Support**" section of the RFP for details about the requirements regarding letters of support.

Optional templates are provided in **Google Docs**.

Applicants are required to submit their budget using the 2024 LFPA Budget Template. This template is available in **Excel** and in **Google Sheets**.

If you need assistance accessing or formatting the budget template, contact us **before** 5:00 pm Central Time on May 20, 2024. 5:00pm is the cut-off for technical assistance.

Preparing your budget

There are two tabs on the budget template spreadsheet. The first tab is the blank template that applicants must use. The top table on that tab includes formulas to track that your budget meets the maximum and minimum requirements in each spending category.

If you have costs associated with each of the various budget categories (food procurement, food storage, food transportation, supporting expenses), costs must be identified with their associated category and each of these costs must be itemized. If you do not have costs in a certain budget category, you can leave that category blank.

When preparing your budget, please keep the following in mind:

- Each line item (expect for the indirect cost rate, if applicable) should be written as if to correspond with the applicable proof of purchase and proof of payment. Additional information about proof of purchase and proof of payment is below. As examples to consider:
  - If you are buying from a food hub/aggregator and your payment will be to that food hub/aggregator rather than a farmer, list that entity as the supplier. (If you know specifically which farmer(s) the hub/aggregator will be sourcing from that information can also be included, but please make it clear who your direct purchase/payment is planned with.)
  - If you are planning on buying pre-packed boxes of eligible local food items and the invoices will indicate you purchased something as a box, you may include a line item for those boxes of food on your budget. You must also provide a description of the box contents, however. If you are buying distinct items from farmers/aggregators and planning to box them yourself for distribution, you must list them as distinct items that correspond with the invoices of your planned purchases.
  - If mileage is included as an expense, use separate line items to distinguish between miles conducted using the applicant's organizational vehicle and miles conducted using personnel's private vehicles (as applicable).
- Quantity can be an identified number of items, number of pounds, number of staff hours, etc.
- Cost per unit could be a dollar amount per pound, per bunch, per item, or dollar amount per hour, etc.

Proof of purchase

Examples of proof of purchase documents can include detailed invoices, itemized receipts, timesheets, and bills of lading. The proof of purchase must clearly show the item(s) purchased and date purchased.

Proof of payment

Examples of proof of payment documents can include zero balance invoices, copies of cleared checks, and direct deposit documentation. The proof of payment includes confirmation by an entity other than the grantee to document how and when payment was made. The intent of the proof of payment is to show that money was spent on what was listed in the project, and that the intended recipients received payments.

Additional information about budget requirements is included in the "**Eligible Expenses**" section of the RFP.

Budget Example

The second tab of the template is an example intended to assist in planning your budget. The top table shows an overall budget that meets the maximum and minimum requirements where applicable. The second table shows an itemized budget with costs in each category.

In this example, the grant project involves buying directly from farmers and distributing food through local community partners over the course of one year. This is intended to be an example, only, and does not include all budget items needed to complete a project.

An example of the quarterly report is available in **Excel.**

Grantees are required to submit their reports using the MDA template provided, on the schedule included in the "**Grant Reporting**" section of the RFP. The template is provided here as an example. It is not a part of the grant application.

An optional template, that uses the below formatting, is available in **Google Docs**.

Timeframe	Description of Key Activities

Applicants may use their own template and formatting for a work plan if preferred, however, the information submitted must include all the same elements included on the MDA template.

It is recommended that the timeframe be listed by the month and year, not by exact dates.

Key activities should include major parts of the project that must be completed to ensure the project's success.

In the below example, the grant project involves buying directly from farmers and distributing food through local community partners over the course of two years. This covers two growing seasons, called seasons one and two here. This is intended to be an example, only, and does not include all milestones needed to complete a project.

Timeframe	Description of Key Activities
August 2024	Confirm available food sources as applicable with farmers for season one
August 2024	Confirm locations for food distribution with community partners
September 2024	Begin season one food procurement and distribution
November 2024	End season one food procurement and distribution
December 2024	Finalize review of purchases for season one
February 2025	Develop purchase agreements with farmers for season two
April 2025	Confirm locations for food distribution with community partners
May 2025	Begin season two food procurement and distribution