

# Draft – MN Local Food Purchase Assistance Program 2023 Request for Applications

*As of 11/17/22*

DRAFT

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# Feedback requested

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We welcome your feedback on all portions of this draft. Feedback can be provided via a Microsoft Form or through participation in a virtual input session. Please see our [Request for Information](#) for a complete overview of those opportunities. We are particularly hoping for feedback in response to the following questions:

## Question A

Page 3. Funding Availability section. The MDA will have approximately \$3.16 million total available for distribution, which is more than had been originally expected when the MDA applied to USDA for funding. As a result, we are proposing to divide the funds available and issue applications for a second funding round, likely in fall/winter 2023. This would allow for additional new projects to be proposed and for continued improvements to the program RFA and administration.

This current RFA proposes to fund projects up to September 15, 2024. This end date could be earlier, but cannot be later. September 15, 2024 would also be the same maximum end date for a second funding round. Because of this, we are proposing to distribute ~66% of the total available funding in this round, and ~33% in the next funding round. What do you think?

## Question B

Page 6. Eligible Projects section; requirements for local and regional food. We propose to align with the USDA definition for local and regional foods, which states 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.

MN LFPA could adopt a narrower definition, however, if desired. For example, it could be changed to require:

- food from within the geographic boundaries of Minnesota, or
- food within Minnesota and bordering counties.

We have suggested a 50% minimum of sourcing from MN if using the broad USDA definition of local and regional foods. What do you think?

## Comment 1

Page 9. The schedule provided for quarterly reports is subject to change based on USDA reporting timelines.

## Question C

Page 9. Project Evaluation section, in regard to how information about the MN LFPA grant should be shared, including the type and kind of data that is available and how it can be accessed. What on-going information would you want about funded MN LFPA work? Please be as specific as possible in your feedback about ideas for project data and updates that you would like see, whether or not you are funded.

## Question D

Page 10. Project evaluation - how projects should be evaluated. Below is a list of potential ways we can structure evaluation activities. We want your feedback on your preferred way to engage, if you were to apply and your project is funded. Based on the feedback we collect, we will choose one or two options to use with all awardees. Keep in mind that project applications can include staff time for evaluation activities. Ideas for evaluation include:

- Participation in an evaluation team to help determine evaluation goals, tools, processes, and frequency
- Submit a written reflection sheet(s) to MDA
- Participation in focus groups with other awardees over the course of the grant
- Semi-structured interviews with MDA staff
- Participation in 1:1 check-in calls with the MDA staff
- Participation in an awardee cohort that meets throughout the year to share about projects.
- Audio/visual recording of project participants and administrators to create digital storytelling about projects around the state
- Other (please explain)

## Comment 2

Page 20. Appendices are not included at this time but will be included as part of the final application.

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## Grant Summary

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### Overview

The Minnesota Department of Agriculture (MDA) offers Local Food Purchase Agreement (LFPA) funds to communities to determine for themselves how local food can be procured and distributed to underserved individuals. 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 two-year economic investment providing a unique opportunity to build relationships and capacity among stakeholders and the agency. Funding is available as part of the federal “Build Back Better” initiative, authorized by the American Rescue Plan. The United States Department of Agriculture has awarded states and federally recognized Tribal Governments LFPA funding. The MDA is making Minnesota (MN) LFPA funds available to the public via a grants process, per public feedback gathered in spring 2022.

### Funding Availability

The Minnesota Department of Agriculture (MDA) anticipates awarding approximately \$2.125 million in MN LFPA funding in [spring 2023](#) using a competitive review process. We expect 21 to 40 grants will be awarded, but the final number will depend on the size of awards. The maximum award is \$100,000 and the minimum award is \$10,000. The award will cover projects of any length through September 15, 2024.

MN LFPA applications must be submitted by **11:59 p.m. CST on [\[date in early March\]](#)** to be considered for funding.

We anticipate issuing a second Request for Applications (RFA) in fall 2023 to award an additional \$1.035 million. The scope and format of a second RFA may be similar or substantially different from the current version, depending on continued public feedback and on-going program evaluation. Applicants not awarded in the first round of funding and new applicants can review eligibility criteria and submit applications at that time.

## Priorities

This grant will prioritize local food procurement from [socially disadvantaged](#) and [emerging farmers](#). This includes: farmers of color; American Indian or Alaskan Native farmers; women; veterans; farmers with disabilities; young farmers; beginning farmers; LGBTQ+ farmers; and urban 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, socially disadvantaged, and emerging 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 lasting market opportunities for farmers and producers, especially those considered socially disadvantaged or emerging
  - Create 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 these outcomes will be evaluated, see the [“Application and Evaluation Profile”](#) section of this document.

## How to Submit Questions

All questions must be submitted and received by **11:59 p.m. CST on [at least seven days before the application deadline in early March]**. Questions should be submitted in writing by emailing ([LFPAGrant.MDA@state.mn.us](mailto:LFPAGrant.MDA@state.mn.us)) but may be submitted through email, phone, mail, or in-person communication with designated MN LFPA staff. Current designated MN LFPA staff are Valerie Gamble, Lebo Moore, and Alexandra Cortes. Contact information and any changes to designated staff will be posted on the MN LFPA grant webpage.

Responses to all questions regarding the application will be posted on the Questions and Answers 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 will be provided until 5:00 p.m. Central Time on the day of the submission deadline by calling [\[XXX\]](#) or emailing [LFPAGrant.MDA@state.mn.us](mailto: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 [date in early March]** 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.
- 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 **[date in early March]** and received by **[two weeks after the application deadline in early March]**. 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.
- 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 under any circumstances.

- Questions due no later than 11:59 pm Central Time **[7 days before the application deadline in early March]**
- Cut-off for technical assistance with the online application system at 5:00 pm Central Time **[date in early March]**
- Applications due no later than 11:59 pm Central Time **[date in early March]**
- Applicants notified of decisions; grant agreement negotiations begin **[April](estimated)**
- Final contract end date **September 15, 2024**

## Grant Eligibility

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### 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.

### Applicants must:

- 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.

If applying as an individual versus a business, you must not have been convicted of a state or federal criminal offense which includes theft, embezzlement of public funds, and forgery.

## Partners and Collaborators

Projects must show joint decision-making between partners. A **partner** is a person or organization with whom there is close cooperation in the management of the project. This can include but is not limited to a fiscal sponsorship arrangement. Each project will need to designate one applicant that meets the eligible applicant criteria listed above in the Eligible Applicants section, who will take responsibility for the grant contract and reporting requirements.

Projects may also involve work with collaborators. A **collaborator** is a person or organization who will help to carry out the project, but who is not involved in managing the project.

Applicants must provide a letter of support from each partner named in the application. The letter(s) must acknowledge the partner's relationship to the applicant and affirm that the partner understands their proposed role in the management of the project.

Socially disadvantaged and emerging farmers may be involved in projects as either partners or collaborators. If a project does not involve one or more **partners** who identify as a socially disadvantaged or emerging farmer, an additional letter of support will be required. This letter must be from a socially disadvantaged or emerging farmer and acknowledge their intent to supply food as part of the proposed project.

Please see Appendix B for examples of collaboration and template letters of support.

## Eligible Projects

MN LFPA funds are intended to fund projects that procure food primarily from socially disadvantaged and emerging farmers and distribute that food to underserved communities. Awardees will be expected to complete basic grant administration, including invoicing, reporting, and project evaluation. Projects may also include an engagement and outreach component in order to connect with farmers and/or distribution points.

Projects must:

- Purchase [local and regional food](#), a majority of which (more than 50%) must be sourced from within the geographic boundaries of Minnesota. Eligible products include meat, poultry, fruit, vegetables, seafood, dairy, grains, legumes, and wild harvested foods. Food may be unprocessed or minimally processed.



- Focus most purchases (more than 50%) from socially disadvantaged and emerging farmers.
- Distribute the food to underserved communities in Minnesota. Food may be distributed through direct-to-consumer, wholesale, retail, or foodservice channels. 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).
- Include work with partners, as detailed in the “Partners and Collaborators” section above.
- 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 farmer(s) during a particular timeframe. Formal agreements can help farmers establish loans and financial assistance. Grantees will be provided an optional template for these agreements.
- Follow all applicable state and local regulations regarding food safety.
- 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 15, 2024.

Projects may also:

- Address food safety training and implementation
- Address food waste

## Eligible Expenses

Project expenses may fall under any combination of the following broad categories:

Expense Type	Budget constraints	Examples
Procurement	Minimum 61% of total budget	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Buying ground meat and honey from a farmer</li> <li>• Buying tomatoes from a food hub that sources from local farmers</li> <li>• Buying cheese from a local dairy</li> </ul>
Storage	NA	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Holding produce at a local food hub before distribution</li> <li>• Paying rent to a community center for use of their controlled access walk-in cooler for storage of meat and milk</li> </ul>
Transportation	NA	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Coordinating with a local CSA farm for delivery to a food shelf</li> <li>• Contracting with a trucking company to move frozen chicken from a farm to a food drop site</li> </ul>
Administration	Maximum 9% of total budget	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Staff hours spent setting up purchase agreements with farms to buy food</li> <li>• Staff time for coordination calls with the MDA</li> <li>• Invoicing and documentation of food purchases and deliveries</li> </ul>

Engagement and Outreach	Maximum 8% of total budget	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Organizing a local meeting for farmers to better understand the LFPA program</li> <li>• Outreach to potential distribution sites</li> <li>• Sharing the impact of your project with a community audience such as your local economic development center</li> </ul>
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Expenses may be used for technical assistance for socially disadvantaged and emerging farmers if facilitating participation in the MN LFPA program. Costs associated with project administration, engagement, and outreach must be directly related to MN LFPA program activities and goals.

Equipment rentals are allowed, but the lease or rental agreement must terminate at the end of the grant cycle.

## 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)
- Production costs such as food safety certifications, training, seed, crop insurance, or general-purpose development or training
- Live animals
- Food distributed through schools as part of the National School Lunch Program
- 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
- Indirect costs (expenses of doing business that are not readily identified with the project)
- Fundraising, including financial campaigns, solicitation of gifts and bequests, and similar expenses incurred to raise capital or obtain contributions
- 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

## Grant Reporting and Project Evaluation

Grant reporting and project evaluation are required to process payments and help determine the long-term impacts of the grant. 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:**

- Quarterly reports (including invoices) and a review of summary data for each year of funding are required by the state of Minnesota and the USDA. These reports will require names and addresses of people or organizations receiving funds. This data is classified as public data. Please see Appendix C for an example of the information required in each quarterly report.
- A monitoring visit is required for any organization receiving more than \$25,000. These will be conducted in-person when possible and will include a full review of the awardee’s project including reporting and evaluation.

**Why:** These reports and visits are required by the USDA and 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 and emerging farmers, and the total number/locations of underserved communities receiving the food.

**How:** Awardees 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:** Quarterly reports will be due on the following timeline.

Due Date	Reporting Range	Type of Report
April 3, 2023	Contract Effective Date – March 31, 2023	Quarterly report and invoicing
July 3, 2023	April 1, 2023 – June 30, 2023	Quarterly report and invoicing
October 2, 2023	July 1, 2023 – September 30, 2023	Quarterly report and invoicing
January 2, 2024	October 1, 2023 – December 29, 2023	Quarterly report and invoicing
April 1, 2024	January 1, 2024 – March 31, 2024	Quarterly report and invoicing
July 2, 2023	April 1, 2024 – June 30, 2024	Quarterly report and invoicing
October 1, 2024	July 1, 2024 – September 15, 2024	Quarterly report and invoicing

## Project Evaluation

**What:**

- Evaluation of the state administration of MN LFPA funds and how well the MDA supports awardees in their individual projects and grant administration.
- Evaluation of each awardee’s individual project. For example, what works well, what additional infrastructure is needed to support this kind of work, what relationships are made because of this funding, how will awardees share project results in their communities, etc.
- Evaluation of how information about the MN LFPA grant should be shared, including the type and kind of data that is available and how it can be accessed.

**Why:** To evaluate 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. 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.

**How:** We want to evaluate projects in a way that is reasonable for awardees and provides meaningful data for stakeholders. *See Question D on page 3.*

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

Date	Reporting Range	Format
	<i>TBD based on feedback. See comment.</i>	

## Application Review Policies

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### Review Process

A review committee, composed of MDA staff and external reviewers, will evaluate all eligible applications based on the criteria in the Application Evaluation Profile. An open call for external grant reviewers will be conducted during [\[same time applications are open\]](#). Reviewers may recommend whole or partial funding of a project. The Commissioner of Agriculture reviews the committee recommendations and is responsible for award decisions. The review committee and Commissioner may use the level of inclusion of socially disadvantaged and emerging farmers, rural/urban, geographic distribution, services to prioritized populations, applicant’s history as a state grantee, and capacity to perform the work when making their decisions. The MDA will notify applicants, both successful and unsuccessful, in writing. Applicants may request a summary of reviewer comments.

### 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 effective date 1/1/21](#).

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 are 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 [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 classified under Minn. Stat. § 13.643, subd. 1 and 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 [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 [Minn. Stat. § 270C.65](#), Subd. 3, and other applicable law. Under this law, the 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 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

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### Pre-Award Financial Review

All **Non-Governmental Organizations (NGOs)** applying for grants in the state of Minnesota must undergo a financial review prior to a grant award made of \$25,000 and higher. To comply with [Policy 08-06: Financial Review of Nongovernmental Organizations](#), you may be asked to submit one of the following documents:

- Grant applicants with annual income of under \$50,000, or who have not been in existence long enough to have a completed IRS Form 990 or audit should submit their most recent board-reviewed financial statements.
- Grant applicants with total annual revenue of \$50,000 or more and less than \$750,000 should submit their most recent IRS Form 990.
- Grant applicants with total annual revenue of over \$750,000 should submit their most recent certified financial audit.

All **individual and for-profit businesses** selected for a grant over \$100,000 must submit a Rev-185i or Rev-185b. 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(s) and receiving reimbursements, the applicant is required to do the following:

- **All grantees:** Complete an IRS W-9 form or register as a vendor in SWIFT, the State's accounting system, and submit other required documentation within 30 days of award notification.
- Non-profit organizations receiving an award over \$25,000: Submit a copy of your organization's most recent audited financial statement.
- For-profit businesses and individuals receiving awards over \$100,000: Complete a [Revenue 185b](#) or a [Revenue 185i](#) form.
- **All grantees:** 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 15, 2024.

## Payments

Grantees can request up to fifty percent of annual funds up-front **each year** of their project, as outlined in their approved budget. **You must indicate in the Budget section of the application if you are requesting advance funds.** Advance funds must be reconciled within one year of each request. Additional payments will not be made until advanced payments have been accounted for. The MDA reserves the right to not honor requests for initial advanced payments, including if an organization has an existing open grant with the MDA. Note that any cash advance that violates the terms of the grant agreement or does not adequately support the approved project will need to be repaid.

All other grant funds are dispersed on a reimbursement basis. All grantee requests for reimbursement must correspond to the approved grant budget. To receive grant payments, grantees must provide proof that grant project work has been done by submitting details of each purchase on receipts or invoices, and proof that the vendors have been paid. 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.

## Site Visits and Financial Reconciliations

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; grantees with awards of \$250,000 or more will receive annual monitoring visits. Other grantees may receive monitoring visits at the discretion of the MDA.

## Bidding Requirements

All funded applicants will be required to abide by the state's bidding requirements for larger purchases. See a detailed list of the state's [bidding requirements](#) for details.

## 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](#).

## Audits of Project

Per [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, 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.

# Application Evaluation Profile

Evaluation Criteria	Maximum Score
<p><b>Project Meets Minimum Criteria</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Project partners are identified, and a letter of support is included from each.</li> <li>• If no project partners are socially disadvantaged or emerging farmers, a letter of support from a socially disadvantaged or emerging farmer collaborator is included.</li> <li>• (If funds are directed to existing programs) Funding will expand or increase those programs.</li> </ul>	Y/N
<p><b>Relationships</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• How well does the project define the community where the work will happen?               <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>○ Project doesn't define community</li> <li>○ Project defines community but doesn't describe the alignment between the those producing the food and those receiving it</li> <li>○ Project defines community AND there is clear alignment between the those producing the food and those receiving it</li> </ul> </li> <li>• How well does the project outline plans for sharing power as part of the proposed project?               <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>○ Project doesn't address power dynamics</li> <li>○ Project addresses power dynamics but doesn't name specific actions to change them</li> <li>○ Project addresses power dynamics AND names specific actions to change them</li> </ul> </li> <li>• How effectively have project partners demonstrated previous work involving sharing of power?               <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>○ Example provided doesn't address sharing of power in previous work</li> <li>○ Example provided addresses power dynamics of previous work and specific actions taken to address them</li> <li>○ Example provided addresses power dynamics of previous work AND specific actions taken to address them AND lessons learned</li> </ul> </li> <li>• How well has the project demonstrated opportunities for building sustainable relationships within their community?               <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>○ Project doesn't demonstrate how work will strengthen community relationships</li> <li>○ Project demonstrates how work will strengthen community relationships</li> <li>○ Project demonstrates how work will strengthen community relationships AND identifies how work will create pathways for additional long-term market opportunities</li> </ul> </li> </ul>	40
<p><b>Outcomes</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Project purchases food from socially disadvantaged and emerging farmers (0 - 15)</li> <li>• Project distributes food to underserved communities (0 – 5)</li> </ul>	20



Evaluation Criteria	Maximum Score
<p><b>Food Safety</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Project addresses food safety training and implementation               <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>○ Either food safety training OR food safety practice implementation</li> <li>○ At least one individual associated with the operation has completed relevant food safety training AND conducts at least one food safety practice relevant to product(s)</li> <li>○ At least one individual has completed relevant food safety training AND the operation has systems in place to monitor and control food safety controls</li> </ul> </li> </ul>	10
<p><b>Food Waste</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Project addresses food waste               <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>○ Project has minimal planning for food waste</li> <li>○ Project includes planning for food waste during production or distribution</li> <li>○ Project includes planning for food waste during production and distribution</li> </ul> </li> </ul>	10
<p><b>Work Plan and Timeline</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Work plan includes months and key actions planned</li> <li>• Project goals are clearly stated</li> <li>• Planned collaborations are clearly identified and supported</li> </ul>	10
<p><b>Budget</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Budget clearly explains how planned expenses support overall LFPA grant goals</li> <li>• Budget clearly explains how requested funds will help meet milestones and goals included in the project timeline</li> </ul>	10
<b>Total</b>	<b>100</b>

## Application Contents (Note: this information will be required on the online and paper applications)

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### Contact Information

#### Applicant Information

- Applicant name
- Organization name (if applicable)
- For the organization if applicable, or individual if not:
  - Mailing Address
  - Telephone
  - Email

## Authorized Representative

If awarded a grant, this person will sign the MN LFPA contract agreement for the organization named above:

- Name
- Title
- Telephone
- Email

## Eligibility

Please confirm that the following statements are true:

- The organization is in good standing with the State of Minnesota. (Yes/No)
- 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 has had acceptable performance on past MDA grants. (Yes/No)
- Your organization is located in Minnesota. (Yes/No)
- No one involved in the project or the application for the grant is an employee or spouse of an employee of the MDA. (Yes/No)
- As an individual applicant, I attest that I have not been convicted for a of criminal offense, such as theft, embezzlement, and forgery, related to state grant agreement. (Yes/No)
- More than 50% of food purchased 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 MDA is unable to reimburse for any work that is performed prior to the start date of the contract. (Yes/No)

## Project Overview

### Grant Request

- Project Name
- Total Grant funds requested. (Maximum of \$100,000, minimum \$10,000.)
- 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 15, 2024.
  - You will have up to one month after your contract end date to submit expenses for a reimbursement.
  - All items and services must be paid for by the end date of the contract.
- Region(s) your project will purchase food from. (Check all that apply.)
  - Northwest
  - Northeast

- West Central
- Twin Cities Metro
- Southwest
- Southeast
- Outside of Minnesota state boundaries
- Region(s) your project will distribute food in. (Check all that apply.)
  - Northwest
  - Northeast
  - West Central
  - Twin Cities Metro
  - Southwest
  - Southeast

### 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 and emerging farmers and underserved communities. Limit your description to 1 – 3 sentences. If awarded, this will be used to share about your project with the public. *(500 characters, including spaces)*

### Project Partners

#### Partner Roles

List each of the partners involved in this project (including the applicant) and provide a 1 – 2 sentence, high level description of each partner’s role in this project. See the [“Partners and Collaborators”](#) section of the RFA for a definition of partners.

#### Letters of Support

Provide a letter of support from each partner named in the application. The letter should acknowledge the partner’s relationship to the applicant and affirm that the partner understands their proposed role in the management of the project.

If a project does not involve one or more partners who identify as a socially disadvantaged or emerging farmer, provide an additional letter of support. This letter must be from a socially disadvantaged or emerging farmer and acknowledge their intent to supply food to the applicants and support of the project.

A letter of support template is in Appendix B.

### Project Narrative

#### Existing Work (if applicable)

If your project plans to direct MN LFPA funds to existing sourcing, purchasing, and distribution programs, this funding must be used to expand or increase that work. Please describe how your proposal will expand or increase your existing programs. *(Max 1,000 characters, including spaces)*

## Relationships

### Community

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

### Building and Sharing Power

To demonstrate this project’s capacity to fulfill the objectives of this grant to work with socially disadvantaged and emerging farmers, please:

Describe steps your project is taking to intentionally build and/or share power with populations that haven’t historically had power. This includes the proposal development process to planned execution of the work, decisions about who is involved as project partners, a decision-making process, and models for food distribution outside of the traditional emergency food/hunger relief distribution structures. *(Max 2,000 characters, including spaces)*

Give an example of previous work completed by project partners to share power within communities and among populations that haven’t historically had power. Include lessons learned if applicable. *(Max 2,000 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)*

### Food Waste

How do you plan to address potential issues related to food waste? *(Max 1,000 characters, including spaces)*

### Food Safety

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

## Outcomes

Please complete the table below to indicate your estimate of who will benefit from your project.

### Farm Businesses

Socially disadvantaged and emerging farm businesses include:

- Black
- Hmong/Asian American
- Latino/Latine
- African/East African

- American Indian or Alaskan Native
- Veterans
- Women
- LGBTQ+
- Farmers with disabilities
- Beginning
- Young

Please identify the total number of farm businesses that you plan to work with in this project: \_\_\_\_\_

Please identify the % of all food purchasing funds that will be directed towards farm businesses that identify as socially disadvantaged or emerging: \_\_\_\_\_%

### Food Distribution to Communities

Please identify the total number of distribution sites that this project plans to serve: \_\_\_\_\_

Describe your distribution sites, and how they meet the [USDA definition of underserved communities](#). (Max 1,000 characters, including spaces)

## Project Plan

### Work Plan Timeline

Include a timeline of milestones for your project that states, at a minimum, months and key actions planned. 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, that uses the below formatting, is available in Appendix D. In this 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 Milestone or Goal
<b>March 2023</b>	<i>Develop purchase agreements with farmers for season one</i>
<b>April 2023</b>	<i>Confirm locations for food distribution with community partners</i>
<b>May 2023</b>	<i>Begin season one food procurement and distribution</i>
<b>September 2023</b>	<i>End season one food procurement and distribution</i>
<b>October 2023</b>	<i>Finalize review of purchases for season one</i>
<b>March 2024</b>	<i>Develop purchase agreements with farmers for season two</i>
<b>April 2024</b>	<i>Confirm locations for food distribution with community partners</i>
<b>May 2024</b>	<i>Begin season two food procurement and distribution</i>

### Budget

Include a budget for your project that states, at a minimum, all major planned expenses. If specific contractors 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. When contractors are named in the application, grantees will not need to undergo a formal bidding process, as described in the [“Bidding Requirements”](#) section of the RFA. This can save you time and effort later.

An optional template that uses the formatting below is available in Appendix E. 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. Example:

Item	Quantity	Cost Per Unit	Total Estimate	Source of Estimate
Food purchase- Farm A	1000 pounds	\$2.25/pound	\$2,250.00	Farm A owner
Food purchase- Farm B	500 pounds	\$3.50/pound	\$1,750.00	Farm B owner
Food purchase- Farm C	200 pounds	\$5/pound	\$1000.00	Farm C owner
Food distribution- Organization A	1700 pounds	\$.50/pound	\$850.00	Organization A owner
Administrative cost	32 hours	\$25.00	\$800.00	Applicant organization
<b>Total cost</b>			\$6,650.00	

### Annual Project Expenditures

Provide estimated grant project expenditures for each calendar year during the grant period.

- Year 1, [spring] 2023 to December 2023: (\$)
  - Are you requesting advance funds for Year 1? (Yes/No)
  - If yes, what percentage of advance funds (up to 50%) are you requesting? (%)
- Year 2, January 2024 – September 15, 2024 (if applicable): (\$)
  - Are you requesting advance funds for Year 2? (Yes/No)
  - If yes, what percentage of advance funds (up to 50%) are you requesting? (%)

### 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 and emerging 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.

## Appendices

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Appendix A: Complete list of grant outcomes

Appendix B: Examples of collaboration and a template letter of support

Appendix C: Quarterly report example

Appendix D: Example project timeline

Appendix E: Example budget document