



# Info Session: MN Local Food Purchase Assistance Program

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# Agenda

- Welcome
- Privacy notice
- Program background
- Request for Applications (RFA) overview
- Application and submission instructions
- Application evaluation
- Questions

# Privacy Notice

- Please be aware that the MDA is recording this session and plans to keep a copy of the recording for approximately two months.
- Under state law, the recording of this public session will be available to anyone who asks to see it. It will also be posted on the MDA website.



# General Session Overview

- Staff introductions
- Presenting the highlights from the Request for Applications
- Questions
  - Put questions in the chat as they come up during the presentation
  - Open Q&A after staff presentation
    - Will do our best! All Q&A will be posted to the website
  - Questions can be submitted through 11:59 p.m. Central Time on May 23, 2023

# Program background

- MN Local Food Purchase Assistance (LFPA) funding made possible by the USDA Agricultural Marketing Service
- Application available to states, tribal nations, and territories in spring 2022
- Developed MDA's application to USDA following conversations with the MDA Emerging Farmers Working Group and public input sessions
- Proposed that funding be available through a grant program for the public



# Grant program purpose

- Fund projects that:
  - Buy local food, primarily from socially disadvantaged and emerging farmers
  - Distribute food **at no cost** to underserved communities throughout the state
- A majority of grant funding is dedicated to food procurement costs so that food can then be provided at no cost to the end users

# Priorities

- 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; and LGBTQ+ farmers.
- Collaboration within communities around the state and distributing food in the same community as it was grown
- Novel food sourcing and distribution outside of the traditional emergency food/hunger relief structures
- Consideration given to the range of awarded projects to ensure that overall distribution of funding impacts different geographic areas across Minnesota

# Funding availability

- Approximately \$2.125 million available this funding cycle
- Projects can run through September 15, 2024
- Maximum award \$100,000; minimum award \$10,000
- A second Request for Applications anticipated in fall 2023



- Additional funding may become available to the MDA from USDA
- The MDA may also have opportunity to extend program timeline by one year
  - September 15, 2025
- Process for applicants
  - Requests for additional funding (up to \$40,000) must be made as part of application
    - Largely for procurement, storage, and transportation-related expenses
  - Requests to extend timeline can be made as part of the application or later on for grantees
- All contingent on MDA's LFPA Plus award from the USDA
- LFPA Plus funds may allow for changes such as more awardees or increasing the size of the awards

# Timelines and deadlines

Event	Date and Time
Questions due	May 23, 2023 at 11:59 p.m.
Online application system technical assistance cut-off	May 30, 2023 at 5:00 p.m.
Applications due	May 30, 2023 at 11:59 p.m.
Applications notified, grant agreement negotiations begin	July 17, 2023 (estimated)
Final contract end date	September 15, 2024

# Eligibility

- Eligible: 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
- Ineligible: MDA employees and spouses, individual applicants convicted of a state or federal offense including theft, embezzlement of public funds, or forgery.
- Requirements for applicant:
  - Legal business entity must be located in Minnesota
  - Must have a Unique Entity ID from the federal System for Award Management
    - Validates your legal business name and address as an organization or individual
  - Be in good standing with the State of Minnesota

*See page 7 of the RFA*



# Partners and collaborators

- Lead applicant must work with at least one **partner**
  - Partners demonstrate close cooperation in the management of the project, including joint decision-making
  - Partnership can include, but is not limited to, a fiscal sponsorship arrangement
  - Lead applicant takes responsibility for the grant contract and reporting requirements
- All partners must submit a letter of support
  - Additional letter of support required from a socially disadvantaged and emerging farmer if not represented among project partners
- Projects may also involve work with **collaborators**
  - Collaborators help to carry out the project, but are not involved in managing the project



*See page 7 of the RFA*

# Eligible projects

## Requirements include

- Sourcing at least 70% of food from within the geographic boundaries of Minnesota
  - Food may be unprocessed or minimally processed. Includes meat, poultry, fruit, vegetables, seafood, dairy, grains, legumes, and wild harvested foods.
- Sourcing at least 70% of food from socially disadvantaged and emerging farmers
- Distributing food at no cost to communities, at least 75% of which must be underserved
- Working with at least one partner
- Offering written, formal agreements to farmers participating in the project
- If proposing to fund an existing effort, increasing or expanding those activities

*See page 8 of the RFA*



# Project examples

- Example 1

- Farm applicant. Works with healthcare clinic as a partner. Shared decision-making and regular communication regarding food needs, project budget, effective distribution of the food at the clinic's drop-in location and during home health visit.

- Example 2

- Food shelf applicant. Sources from multiple farmers and distributing food at food shelf. Some farmers included as partners because they are helping recruit additional farmers to the project and making decisions about how the foods will be sourced and transported. Farmers that are just acting as suppliers are collaborators rather than partners.

- Example 3

- Five farmers working together as partners to aggregate and distribute product through weekly community drop-offs. One farmer is lead applicant. Other farmers are partners serving roles related to project promotions, aggregation, and distribution, in addition to supplying food.

*Additional examples available in Appendix B*

# Budget categories

Category	Budget constraints
Procurement	Minimum 61% of total budget
Storage	N/A
Transportation	N/A
Administration	Maximum 9% of total budget
Engagement and Outreach	Maximum 8% of total budget

*See page 8 of the RFA*

# Eligible expenses

- All project costs must be directly related to approved project activities and be allowable as described in section 8.2 of the [USDA AMS Grants Division Terms and Conditions](#)
- Within budget categories, eligible expenses include
  - Personnel
  - Consultant services and contractual costs
  - Materials and supplies
  - Equipment (limited to lease or rental of general purpose equipment)
  - Travel costs
  - Other (e.g. meeting expenses; communications and publications expenses)



*See Appendix D*

# Ineligible expenses

- Production costs
  - Examples: food safety certifications, training, seed, crop insurance, general purpose training
- Live animals
- Food distributed through schools as part of the National School Lunch Program
- Acquisition costs of general purpose equipment or lease agreements (i.e. lease-to-own or rent-to-own)
- Business license and registration costs

*See page 9 of the RFA*



# Requirements for grant recipients

- Pre-award financial review
- Financial management
- Payments
- Site visits
- Grant reporting, monitoring, and project evaluation

*Additional information available on pages 11 – 12 and 15 – 16 of the RFA*

# Connection directory

- Looking for project partners and collaborators?
- Advertise your services or needs through an [online directory form](#)
- [Responses](#) are publicly viewable and automatically updated



# Application and submission instructions

- Applications due by 11:59 p.m. Central Time on May 30, 2023
  - Preferred to be submitted online
  - Paper copies available by request
- Instructions and TA available for online application system, through 5:00 p.m. on the application deadline
- Online system allows you to save and come back to your application later
- Character limits are automatically enforced and include spaces
- Applicants will receive an automated confirmation email after submitting an application

# Application Sections

The application asks for:

- Contact information
- Eligibility confirmation
- Project overview
  - Project plans and description
  - Partner partners - roles and letters of support
- Project narrative. Short and long form questions about:
  - Relationships - community, building and sharing power, long-term sustainability
  - Food waste prevention
  - Food safety



# Application Sections Continued

- Outcomes. Metrics regarding impacted farm businesses and communities receiving food
- Project plan
  - Work plan timeline
  - Budget
- LFPA Plus funds request (optional)

*See pages 20 – 24 of the RFA*

# Application tools

- Optional templates available for:
  - Letters of support – Appendix C. Partner template; socially disadvantaged and emerging farmer template.
    - [Google doc version](#) available
  - Work plan – Appendix F
    - [Google doc version](#) available
  - Budget - Appendix G
    - [Google doc](#) and [Excel versions](#) available
- Submitted work plans and budgets that use other formatting must have the elements included on the MDA templates

# Proposal review and selection process

- Competitive application process
- Review committee will score all applications submitted by May 30, 2023 at 11:59 p.m.
  - Look for an open call soon for review committee member recruitment
- MDA Commissioner reviews committee recommendations and is responsible for award decisions
- Decision making process may include:
  - Review committee scores
  - Level of inclusion of socially disadvantaged and emerging farmers
  - Rural/urban and other geographic distribution
  - Services to prioritized populations
  - Applicant's history as a state grantee
  - Capacity to perform the work

# Evaluation criteria

- Three factors evaluated on a present/absence basis
  - Letter of support from each project partner
  - Additional letter of support from socially disadvantaged and emerging farmer if no project partners are socially disadvantaged and emerging farmers
  - (If funding is directed to existing programs) Funding will expand or increase those programs
- Numerical scoring system used for remaining application components
  - Relationships - four questions, up to 40 points total
  - Outcomes – three questions, up to 30 points total
  - Food waste prevention – one question, up to 5 points total
  - Food safety – one question, up to 5 points total
  - Work plan timeline - two questions, up to 10 points total
  - Budget – two questions, up to 10 points total

**Total max points of 100 for LFPA funding (request up to \$100,000)**

# Scoring system

- Separate question and scoring system for LFPA Plus funding (additional \$40,000)
  - One question, up to 10 points total
- Scoring system for each question is tiered by high/medium/low. Example:

Criteria	High Score (10)	Medium Score (5)	Low Score (0)
<b>How well does the project define the community where the work will happen?</b>	Project defines community AND there is clear alignment between those producing the food and those receiving it	Project defines community but doesn't describe or form alignment between those producing the food and those receiving it	Project doesn't define community

# Additional agency updates

- New, separate grant opportunity from the MDA released on Monday
  - Emerging Farmers Technical Assistance Grant
- For organizations to
  - Provide technical and culturally appropriate services to emerging farmers, and/or
  - Pay for up to 65% of emerging farmers' premium expenses each year up to two years under the USDA Micro Farm Crop Insurance program
- Applications due by **8 a.m. June 26, 2023**
- Staff contact: Jenny Heck

<https://www.mda.state.mn.us/business-dev-loans-grants/emerging-farmer-technical-assistance-grant>

# Questions?

Please put your name or question in the chat

## **MN Local Food Purchase Assistance Program**

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