

MINNESOTA'S DRAFT APPLICATION FOR THE USDA LOCAL FOOD PURCHASE ASSISTANCE PROGRAM (LFPA)

1. **Project Title** - Local Food Purchase Assistance Program for Minnesota
2. **Requested LFPA Funds** - \$2,760,000.00
3. **Draft for public dissemination, published on April 11, 2022 by the Minnesota Department of Agriculture as part of a Request for Information (RFI)**

DRAFT

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

Include a summary of 250 words or less, suitable for dissemination to the public. This summary should include a concise outline of the project's purpose; activities to be performed, including subawards (when applicable); deliverables and expected outcomes; intended beneficiaries; and any other pertinent information. This summary will be made available to the public.

The Minnesota Department of Agriculture (MDA) proposes to use Local Food Purchase Agreement (LFPA) funds to establish a program that allows communities to determine for themselves how local food can be procured and distributed to underserved individuals. While this funding is a two-year economic investment, it provides a unique opportunity to build relationships and capacity among stakeholders and the agency.

Based on initial input with members of the MDA's [Emerging Farmers Working Group](#) (EFWG) and two public listening sessions, we propose establishing a framework for ongoing public engagement that can support community-informed decisions on the continued direction of program design, implementation, and evaluation of Minnesota's LFPA funds. Following extensive engagement during summer 2022, the MDA will issue a call for community procurement and distribution project proposals in fall 2022. These 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. Procurement and distribution will take place during 2023 and 2024.

Assessment of the public engagement processes used throughout this program will support the continued integration of stakeholder feedback into agency initiatives and drive how the agency supports more resilient local and regional food systems in Minnesota in collaboration with stakeholders.

ALIGNMENT AND INTENT

Clearly articulate the reason for requesting the funds. Briefly describe the need for cooperative agreement funds. Describe the intended benefits for producers and for recipients. How will the funds increase local food consumption and help build and expand economic opportunity for local, regional farmers/producers and for socially disadvantaged farmers/producers? How will the distribution of food target underserved communities and those communities not normally served through traditional food distribution networks?

The Minnesota Department of Agriculture (MDA) proposes to use Local Food Purchase Agreement (LFPA) funds to establish a program that allows communities to determine for themselves how local food can be procured and distributed to underserved individuals. While this grant is a two-year economic investment, it provides a unique opportunity to build relationships and capacity among stakeholders and the agency. In response to Covid-19 supply chain disruptions and ongoing threats of climate change the MDA is committed to building more resilient local and regional food systems in Minnesota but must do that in collaboration with stakeholders.

This application was informed by conversations with members of the MDA's [Emerging Farmers Working Group](#) (EFWG)¹ and two public input sessions. Themes expressed by stakeholders during this initial public engagement included:

- Centering decision-making in communities as much as possible
- Reducing or eliminating barriers to participation and avoiding duplication of similar work that already exists
- Providing flexibility in procurement and distribution knowing there is no one-size-fits-all model
- Keeping food in the community where it is grown
- Designing food procurement contracts and payment to be easy for farmers
- Working with organizations in a fair and straightforward way that is open to all

Based on initial input, we propose establishing a framework for continued outreach and public engagement during the summer of 2022 regarding the design, implementation, and evaluation of Minnesota's LFPA program. This aligns with the MDA's strategic initiatives to conduct effective and responsive outreach to engage traditional and non-traditional stakeholders, integrate feedback into program development, and reduce barriers to being successful in agriculture. Drawing from the core values established by the [International Association for Public Participation](#) (IAP2), we believe this engagement will allow for the desired innovation, flexibility and re-centering of decision-making requested by farmers, leaders and representatives from the food and agricultural community in Minnesota.

This engagement will result in three main elements:

1. A program plan detailing how community proposals will be solicited and selected for the purpose of procuring food from socially disadvantaged farmers and distributing it to underserved communities.
2. A program evaluation framework that is easy for awardees to use, can meet grant reporting requirements and community needs, and assesses additional infrastructure needs for developing resilient local and regional food systems in the state.
3. Assessment of the public engagement strategies used in the implementation of this program, to inform future outreach engagement by the agency and support the continued integration of stakeholder feedback into the design of agency programs, policies, and processes.

We ask that USDA fund Minnesota's LFPA program beginning in mid-September, after these three elements are established. The MDA will then issue a call for community funding proposals. This means that community entities will have the fall to apply for funding from the state, will be notified in early

¹ The EFWG was created during the 2020 legislative session with the purpose of advising the Minnesota Commissioner of Agriculture and the state legislature regarding the development and implementation of programs and initiatives that support emerging farmers in the state. There are currently nineteen active community members and one staff coordinator. Emerging farmers are defined in Minnesota statute as: farmers or aspiring farmers who are women, veterans, persons with disabilities, American Indian or Alaskan Natives, members of a community of color, young, and urban, and any other emerging farmers as determined by the commissioner.

winter of their award, and will begin implementation of procurement and distribution work in the spring of 2023, at the start of a new growing season.

Known challenges for local farmers, especially for socially disadvantaged farmers, are varied, but include access to land, access to markets, and the ability to obtain long-term financial support for farming operations. While this program cannot independently address all these needs, it provides an opportunity for socially disadvantaged farmers to access new markets and demonstrate short-term contract fulfillment. This can position farmers well for securing business with new buyers, open doors to future lending opportunities and invest in sustainable and resilient development for small-scale local farms in Minnesota.

Though specific models for local food procurement and distribution will be determined through community decision-making, the MDA has confirmed support for public engagement from partners at the Minnesota Departments of Health, Education, and Human Services. The opportunity to work across state agencies not only allows for more expansive outreach and engagement but also provides a chance to enhance the inter-connectedness of state programs and staff to better coordinate services for socially disadvantaged farmers and underserved communities. For example, the [Statewide Health Improvement Partnership](#) (SHIP), coordinated through the Department of Health, has representatives covering every county in Minnesota. SHIP currently has 5,250 partner sites, 2,100 collaborative partnerships, and 850 engaged community leaders already working to increase access to healthy foods. SHIP staff and partners are well placed to aid communities with underserved population assessments, that can then lead to community project proposals.

In addition, this project will draw from the [Statewide Cooperative Partnership for Local and Regional Markets](#), a three-year initiative established in 2020 through the MDA and the University of Minnesota with funding from the USDA Federal State Marketing Improvement Program. The Partnership is a group of 40+ organizations that are providing input on the diverse experiences of small- and mid-sized producers across the state and supporting the development of data collection and analysis from hundreds of farmers, supply chain partners, and consumers. These data will provide a crucial baseline assessment of local and regional markets in the state and complement the long-term goals of the LFPA program.

There is a groundswell of support for local and regional foods in Minnesota with many groups currently working to quantify, enhance, develop, and sustain local and regional markets in the state. These funds would complement this local food work by providing an economic stimulus, but we must recognize the work that is already happening within communities. We believe we can do this by making sure that those who will be most impacted by these funds have a direct say in how money is allocated, and have an opportunity to come together as a community to feed themselves and identify opportunities and barriers for the development of future local food infrastructure.

Provide a Listing of Objectives This Project Hopes to Achieve

Provide the objectives that your organization intends to achieve through the use of these funds.

Objective 4 can be related to any aspect of the program and can address your unique set of circumstances.

Objective 1 (purchase related):

- Invest at least \$1.4 million dollars into food purchased from local farmers over the course of two years.
- Spend at least 51% of those dollars on purchases from socially disadvantaged farmers.

Objective 2 (distribution related):

- Prioritize procurement of food that can be distributed within the community that it is produced.
- Through outreach and public engagement, provide community members the opportunity to determine pathways and parameters for procurement and distribution that can meet the unique needs of farmers and underserved members of the community.

Objective 3 (related to sharing of lessons learned or improving outcomes or fostering adoption of promising best practices):

- Organizations contracted for community projects provide contracts to socially disadvantaged farmers participating in the program to demonstrate their reliable product delivery and financial management and improve their chances of receiving business loans and/or accessing new markets.

Objective 4 (optional):

- Develop a program evaluation framework that is easy for awardees to use, can meet grant reporting requirements, and assess additional infrastructure needs for developing resilient local and regional food systems in the state.
- Evaluate the process of public engagement itself to inform MDA on how to refine and continue to conduct effective outreach and engagement and integrate feedback into the design of programs and policies.

Project Beneficiaries

Describe the producers you intend to purchase from and the recipients you expect to benefit from this program? How many producers and how many recipients do you expect to benefit from your program?

Minnesota has a developing local and regional food production landscape that is strong and varied. Many farmers in this space are considered emerging, as defined in state statute, and would also fall within the USDA definition of socially disadvantaged. For this reason, we have centered this application within the Emerging Farmers Working Group and will continue to pursue building relationships within communities of emerging farmers, particularly with Black, Indigenous, Latino/Latine and Asian American populations in acknowledgement of the historical injustice and harm done to these communities that has resulted in unequal opportunity for economic development and land sovereignty.

Our expectation for this program is to work with at least 30 organizations to purchase food from a minimum of 140 local farms around the state and distribute that food directly to members of the communities closest to those farms. The 140 producers will include diversified fruit and vegetable growers, livestock and dairy farmers, those who have integrated specialty crop-livestock operations, and gatherers of traditional foods such as wild rice.

As indicated, our proposal centers public engagement and community decision-making in the design, implementation, and evaluation of this project, as aligned with the MDA strategic plan. As such,

additional specifics about the beneficiaries of this program will be determined by communities themselves. A more detailed explanation of this community-led process is outlined in the workplan below. Recipients of the food procured through this program will likely include, but are not limited to, the following types of organizations that provide food to underserved members of the community: childcare providers, youth development centers, retailers, colleges, prisons, community centers, churches, meal delivery service providers, group homes, assisted living facilities and nursing homes, and nonprofit organizations. Underserved individuals may also directly receive food from farmers. Entities that are submitting community project proposals will be expected to provide more specifics about the numbers and types of producers, distribution sources, and recipients they expect to benefit from their programs.

PROPOSAL NARRATIVE

Work Plan

Describe how you will meet the objectives of the program and demonstrate that your organization and sub recipients have the ability to carry out the procurements with ample planning, resources, financial controls, reporting ability and risk management plans. In addition, provide a timeline and milestones. The proposal must include the below six headings followed by a narrative that includes a response for each of the points noted below:

As a result of Covid-19 supply chain disruptions and ongoing threats of climate change, the MDA prioritizes opportunities, like these LFPA funds, to support resilient local and regional food systems. Building and strengthening relationships between producers and consumers at all scales, in particular connecting with those who are most marginalized, creates the social networks that are the foundation of resiliency. Conversations with community stakeholders have thus far shaped the vision for this program and stakeholder input will continue to be central to the development of program details. The MDA must involve community members in the decision-making process throughout the grant to build relationships that will last beyond this cooperative agreement.

Thus far, planning for this program has included MDA staff conversations with inter-agency partners, the MDA Emerging Farmers Working Group, and two public input sessions. We propose to continue and expand this planning during the summer of 2022, prior to receiving funding from the USDA. Key pieces of Minnesota's LFPA program that stakeholders will be asked to shape include, but are not limited to:

- The development of an application procedure designed to be accessible for the public
- Outreach efforts needed to support statewide engagement, including by emerging farmers, in the program development process
- The merits of factors such as pricing lists and one versus two-year project cycles
- Criteria for evaluating applications
- Overall program evaluation

Based on initial feedback, formats for gathering stakeholder input may include additional public input meetings hosted by the MDA. There may also be opportunities for community listening circles hosted by

community organizations, and continued conversations with the MDA Emerging Farmers Working Group.

Following the summer 2022 development phase, proposals will be accepted for community procurement and distribution projects. Projects will be evaluated using the criteria determined during the planning phase and contracts will be established for selected projects. These contracts will explore ways to build adaptable systems that can ensure procurement and distribution is accomplished during the 2023 and 2024 growing seasons and beyond. Contracts will be issued following internal MDA and state government procedures.

Plan and Objectives: *Discuss your planned activities for achieving goals and providing project deliverables. Describe how your organization and if applicable, sub recipients will ensure the identified producers are engaged in procurements and your plan to ensure distribution of foods to the targeted groups. Provide a plan for evaluating accomplishments and outcomes, matching to project deliverables and verifiable indicators to demonstrate how progress will be measured and achieved. Include capturing lessons learned and strategies to improve program outcomes.*

Deliverable 1: Develop a Request for Proposals (RFP)

MDA staff will use feedback gathered during the summer 2022 engagement and planning phase to develop an initial draft of an RFP designed to solicit community proposals for procurement and distribution projects. Public input will determine if the RFP that is developed will be designed to fund projects for one- or two-year periods. Feedback will also determine the application format, along with the variety of questions and amount of detail that the RFP should collect about the community projects being proposed, without being too burdensome for communities to apply. See Deliverable 5 for more specifics on how decision this will impact contracts and timing.

The contents of the RFP draft will be shared widely for additional public input. The draft will clearly describe the program eligibility criteria and required work. These requirements will include reaching socially disadvantaged farmers, providing food to communities with more limited access to traditional food distribution networks, and collection of data to support statewide evaluation. Feedback on that draft will be solicited during late summer 2022, and the formal call for community project proposals will open shortly after the MDA begins receiving USDA LFPA funds in mid-September.

We expect that there will be strong interest in this program and see a variety of roles needed among prospective applicants for successful execution. These roles include:

- Entities with experience in food production
- Entities with experience in food procurement
- Entities with experience in food distribution
- Entities that have well established connections to socially disadvantaged farmers and/or underserved communities
- Fiscal sponsors that can administer funds and assist with reporting requirements

In some cases, a single entity may have experience successfully executing multiple of these roles and may be able to propose a project independently. As part of the process of developing the request for community project proposals, we will continue to explore how we can encourage collaborations

between entities that may have more narrow experience and that want to work with others to achieve the program goals.

Deliverable 2: Conduct effective and responsive outreach to increase equitable access to the request for community proposals

There is no one way to contact all socially disadvantaged farmers or underserved communities in the state. Much of the outreach about this program and opportunity will need to occur through word of mouth. By continuing to engage varied communities in the planning process we expect to increase the networks of people that are aware of the call for community project proposals, identify specific outreach strategies needed to support widespread awareness, and ways to support applicants in successfully requesting funds.

For example, Local Public Health and Tribal SHIP coordinators already work with community-based organizations and Tribal Nations throughout the State to improve access to healthy food for underserved communities. These SHIP coordinators can assist in connecting with underserved communities to share about the LFPA opportunity and help local community organizations apply for contracts to carry out the food procurement and distribution.

Deliverable 3: Determine awards and initiate contracts

Proposals will be reviewed according to criteria established during public engagement in summer 2022. Initial input has indicated interest in prioritizing proposals that:

- Require minimal transportation between the food production site(s) and the end-users
- Source and distribute culturally appropriate foods
- Involve organizations that are true access points for farmers and communities
- Build relationships that can be sustainable post LFPA funding
- Use distribution methods outside of traditional emergency food distribution networks

These are in addition to criteria ensuring funds get to socially disadvantaged farmers and food gets to underserved communities, to meet the USDA's program goals and the Minnesota-specific outcomes proposed in the Achievability section.

The proposal review process will include community members throughout the state along with state agency staff. We propose to release an open call for community reviewers at the same time as the call for community project proposals. This will allow individuals who are familiar with local food systems, including emerging farmers and individuals working with socially disadvantaged farmers and/or underserved communities, to participate in the review team provided they are not directly affiliated with prospective applicants.

MDA staff will establish contracts with awardees, as determined by the review team. The type of contract will be determined by the amount to be awarded. See Deliverable 5 for more details on contracts.

Deliverable 4: Establish relationships and implement on-going communication processes with awardees

The MDA will work with contracted entities and provide orientation and assistance as needed leading up to the start of the 2023 growing season. Similar support will be provided before the 2024 growing season. Initial input has indicated that this program offers an opportunity for the MDA to build trust with entities and individuals with whom it may not have prior or strong relationships. It is important therefore, that MDA staff and awardees establish comfortable communication channels. This includes creating a plan for conflict resolution so that people know how and where to direct issues and concerns related to the project. Most of the ongoing communication is expected to take place via phone, email, and/or teleconference. In-person monitoring visits may take place during active procurement and distribution seasons, to see projects in action.

In addition to establishing individual relationships between the MDA and each awardee, there may be interest in developing relationships between awardees. The MDA will seek additional input during the planning phase in summer 2022 to determine if there is interest in a collaborative, cohort type experience for awardees, and if so, how it should be organized. Feedback from members of the Statewide Cooperative Partnership have indicated that establishing semi-structured opportunities for community members involved in similar work to communicate/convene together is an effective tool for networking, troubleshooting of project challenges, and building capacity. Holding a space for this relationship development can strengthen the experience for awardees and contribute to ongoing program evaluation. In addition, this provides an opportunity for the MDA to intentionally work in tandem with community to envision long-term sustainability of local and regional markets and create resilient social networks that can be activated in response to unpredictable or unforeseen events.

Deliverable 5: Procurement and Distribution of food

Contracted organizations will conduct procurement and distribution of food during 2023 and 2024. An RFP for community projects will be released in fall 2023. Awardees will be notified in January 2023, and contracts with awardees will be established in February 2023. If it is determined that there will be two rounds of community funding, a second round of contracts will be issued in the winter of 2023 – 2024. These timelines are based on preliminary input on how to best engage with farmers and organizations in between outdoor growing seasons while also taking into consideration internal MDA timelines for administering contracts.

Due to Minnesota's growing seasons, we expect that most of the procurement will take place between June – September each year. However, procurement of local products not tied to an outdoor growing season may take place over a longer season. The MDA will maintain communication with awardees during these time periods to ensure that procurement and distribution is taking place, progress and financial reporting is submitted, and additional support is available as needed.

Deliverable 6: Ongoing data collection that supports established grant program evaluation

As part of the public engagement planned for the summer of 2022, we will work with community members to establish an evaluation framework that can demonstrate our accomplishments and outcomes on program deliverables and indicators. This includes developing a process for data management and sharing progress/outcomes in a transparent and accessible format. Initial feedback indicates that this framework must be easy for awardees, must clearly communicate why data is being collected, and how data privacy will be maintained.

Because of this initial feedback, our unique outcomes for this program (Outcomes 4.a and 4.b) are focused on the development of an evaluation framework for this program that can go beyond USDA reporting requirements. We aim to establish a framework based on community input that can inform the MDA of additional infrastructure needs to support the development of local and regional markets while also presenting a model for program evaluation based in effective and responsive outreach that integrates feedback and contributes to reducing barriers to being successful in agriculture.

The evaluation framework may include more qualitative approaches to evaluate how the initial LFPA investment can make a lasting and sustainable impact on local and regional market development. One example is the Community Voice Method, which is an approach to public participation and participatory research that relies on multiple rounds of engagement and data analysis to allow for more inclusive engagement and deeper understanding of local issues. Recently, it was used to [identify opportunities and barriers to local and regional food systems in Warren County, NC](#).

Once Minnesota's LFPA funding has begun and community project awardees are determined, the MDA will be responsible for obtaining on-going data and evaluation reporting from awardees to track the outcome indicators proposed in this application, along with additional indicators that may be suggested during the public engagement planning phase. The MDA will also be responsible for sharing progress/outcomes with the public based on input from community engagement. Awardees will be responsible for identifying relevant stakeholders in their communities and detailing how they plan to share progress on and outcomes from their individual projects with these stakeholders.

Resources: *Discuss the resources you will assign to this project and how you plan to manage the procurement process (i.e. Develop new acquisition team, utilize existing procurement resources, subaward procurement activities). Identify key personnel involved in tasks identified in your plan. List partner organizations and collaborators and their roles in the program. Identify key personnel involved, and timelines for achieving milestones.*

Key personnel at the MDA include Valerie Gamble, Alex Cortes, and Lebo Moore. Valerie is the designated project PI, Alex brings significant expertise in outreach, engagement, and process development, and Lebo brings expertise in engagement, data evaluation and analysis. Lebo is also one of the leads for the MN Statewide Cooperative Partnership for Local and Regional Markets, bringing a key connection to closely aligned work. Collaborators include additional staff from MDA and staff from MDH, MDE, and MDHS. Partner organizations will be identified through the call for community project proposals and contracting process later in fall 2022 – winter 2023. Partners will include organizations that have direct, respected relationships with socially disadvantaged and local producers, organizations that have the capacity to move funds from the state to farmers, and organizations that can provide distribution to communities when identified as a need.

Key milestones include the start of Minnesota's LFPA funding, beginning and close of the call for community proposals, contracting with organizations and planning for the 2023 and 2024 growing seasons, and the beginning of food procurement and distribution. The timing of these is outlined below.

Financial Controls: *Discuss how you will provide adequate financial controls to monitor financial awards and sub recipients and how you will ensure that funding is being used for the stated objective. Include systems and methods to ensure adequate controls will be in place.*

The MDA uses the State of Minnesota Statewide Integrated Financial Tool (SWIFT) System to track financial details separately for each federal agreement and project. MDA's federal grant expenditures are reported on the Minnesota Single Audit report. All disbursements to our partners will be overseen by the MDA's Finance and Budget Division. Their review ensures that costs are claimed in accordance with cost principles and grant program guidelines. An appropriation account is used to record resources that have been appropriated to an agency. An appropriation account controls the total amount of an agency's expenditures, provides a summary of funding, and must contain a valid legal citation. At least one allotment and expense budget must be established before any money can be encumbered and spent from an appropriation account. The Minnesota Management and Budget (MMB) approves and enters all additions, changes, or deletions of appropriation account information submitted by agencies. The Executive Budget Officer (EBO) approves all transactions before they are entered.

Sub-awards and contracts issued under this grant will have required financial and progress reports. Forms and timelines for submission of these reports to the MDA will be specified in the contract and sub-award paperwork. Key personnel working on the grant will be responsible for ensuring submission of these forms and reports and reviewing them for completion of contract terms. The timeline for submission will be quarterly, at a minimum.

Reporting (progress and financial) and Evaluation: *Indicate your strategies for providing USDA the required reports necessary to measure progress toward purchasing and distribution goals and required financial reporting. The award recipient is responsible for obtaining and rolling up and consolidating reports from entities receiving subawards.*

As stated above, progress and financial reports will be required by the MDA on at least a quarterly basis from all contractors. The contract forms will include required reporting information, which will be compiled at the state level and submitted by key personnel. Overall project management tracking will include reporting over the life of the program to ensure reports are submitted in a timely manner to the MDA, to allow for consolidation and reporting to the USDA. An example reporting form is included with this application.

Risk and Fraud Mitigation Plans: *Describe how you will put in place necessary controls to reduce risk and to perform controls to reduce the possibility of fraud with procurement partners and those involved in distribution of the purchased food. Include measures to ensure controls are in place to reduce the risk of fraud by sub recipients.*

The State of Minnesota has strong policies in place to mitigate risks and potential fraud. The MDA will be following these policies in the implementation of this program. These policies include:

- State agencies must consider a grant applicant's performance on prior grants from that agency before making a new grant award of over \$5,000.
- Before awarding a grant of over \$25,000 to a nongovernmental organization, Minnesota state agencies must assess a recent financial statement (e.g. an internal financial statement, an IRS Form 990, or a certified financial audit) from that organization. Items of significant concern must

be discussed with the grant applicant and resolved to the satisfaction of state agency staff before a grant is awarded.

- Grant payments are typically issued on a reimbursement basis. Reimbursement requests are weighed against the approved grant budget, grant expenditures to-date and the latest grant progress report before approving payment.
- At least one monitoring visit is required before final payment is made on all state grants over \$50,000. Annual monitoring visits (minimum) are required on grants of over \$250,000. These monitoring visits may occur by phone or in person, but program staff will make every effort to conduct visits in person when possible.

An external entity, the statewide Office of Grants Management, is also available to the public to report suspected grant fraud and waste. The MDA is responsible for responding to any such reported comments accordingly.

Timeline: *Provide a timeline of activities and milestones. Include timing of procurements and expected delivery periods.*

- **Development of process for community proposals, criteria for review, and RFP text:** Now through September 14, 2022
- **Start date for Minnesota’s LFPA funding:** September 15, 2022
- **Open call for community procurement and distribution project proposals:** September 30, 2022 through November 30, 2022
- **Review of community project proposals:** December 1, 2022 through January 15, 2023
- **Awardee notification:** January 16, 2023 through January 30, 2023
- **Awardee contracts established:** February 2023
- **Food procurement and distribution:** March 1, 2023 through August 31, 2024
- **End date for Minnesota’s LFPA funding:** September 15, 2024

ACHIEVABILITY

These outcomes and indicators are consistent with the progress reporting requirements for this program. All applicants must identify how they will meet Outcome indicators 1 and 2. You also may create your own outcome and indicator that identifies the expected short term and long-term impacts of your work. You will need to establish baseline numbers and/or estimate realist target numbers for the outcome and indicator.

Outcome Indicators

Complete all applicable project Outcomes and Indicators with estimated realistic target numbers. These outcome indicators will be required to be provided for quarterly progress reports.

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 participate in the program	140
1.b.	Of the number in 1.a., the number of producers/vendors that are socially disadvantaged	71
1.c.	Total dollars expected to be expended to purchase local and regional food through this program	\$1.4 million
1.d.	Of the number in 1.c., how many dollars will be expended to purchase food from socially disadvantaged producers/vendors	\$714,000

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

A goal of the program is to target distribution of food to underserved communities. In order to measure success, it will be necessary to provide estimates of how much food will be distributed and how much of that food will go to underserved communities

Indicator	Description	Estimated dollars	Estimated number
2.a.	Provide an estimate of total number of dollars expected to be expended.	\$1.4 million	
2.b.	Of the numbers in 2.a., Provide an estimate of total number of dollars expected to be expended and to underserved communities.	\$1,050,000	
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

The following project outcomes will be required at the conclusion of each program year. For your submission, provide your goals for program outcomes 1-3.

The goal of this program is to increase access to local food and improve supply chain resiliency by building partnerships with local and regional producers, socially disadvantaged farmers/producers, and underserved communities. A desired outcome of the LFPA is that these partnerships continue after the program concludes.

At the end of each performance year, recipients will be required to provide a final report. This report will include a summary of the data from the quarterly progress reports and a narrative addressing questions 1 through 3 below. The narrative responses will be used to measure the outcome of the program.

In your response to question 1 and 2, compare the number of partnerships built through the LFPA to partnerships in existence prior to the program, and of those, the percentage that will continue at the conclusion of the program. In your response to question 3, compare the total deliveries of food products through the LFPA to the deliveries made to underserved communities that are not served by current food distribution networks (such as TEFAP), and the percentage of those food distributions that will continue at the conclusion of the program.

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.
 - a. Goal: 75% 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.
 - a. Goal: 75% of purchases from socially disadvantaged farmers/producers will result in new marketing opportunities, and 20% will likely be sustained after the funding is expended.
 - b. Goal: 50% of socially disadvantaged farmers have formal contracts 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.
 - a. Goal: 75% 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: Unique outcome for your project

Initiatives are strongly encouraged to add at least one Outcome and Indicator(s) based on relevant initiative efforts not covered above. Creativity is highly encouraged, particularly regarding any metrics reflecting coordination, learning, and responsiveness.

Project Specific Outcome Indicator(s)

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

Outcome Indicator Measurement Plan

For each completed outcome indicator, describe how you derived the numbers, how you intend to measure and achieve each relevant outcome and indicator, and any potential challenges to achieving the estimated targets and action steps for addressing them.

Outcome and Indicator # <i>I.e., 3.i., 6.a., 6.b.</i>	How did you derive the estimated numbers? <i>I.e., documented background or baseline information, recent research and data, etc.</i>	How and when do you intend to evaluate? <i>I.e., surveys, 3rd party assessment</i>	Anticipated key factors predicted to contribute to and restrict outcome <i>Including action steps for addressing identified restricting factors</i>
1.a	<p>We estimate using \$1.4 million for food procurement. An average contract of \$10,000/farm seems feasible for farms to manage based on what we know from external stakeholders, therefore we aim to work with at least 140 farms.</p>	<p>The exact evaluation framework will be determined through public engagement. Anticipated examples include:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Periodic reports from subaward contractors indicating the total number and names of producers they have purchased food from. - Site visits to contracted organizations. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - We may receive more applications than we can fund and we are planning to discuss how to address this as part of our public engagement around conflict resolution. - Asking contracted entities to provide the names of producers they have purchased from may prove difficult. Contracted entities may feel protective of their producers, knowing that some are wary of government involvement. Contract entities may themselves be mistrusting of the agency. Outreach, engagement, and centering decision making within communities aims to provide these entities awareness of the opportunity and a chance to start building a relationship with MDA.
1.b	<p>The total number of farms we estimate working with is 140. We determined that at minimum 51% of the farms we work with would meet the definition of socially disadvantaged. 71 farms is 51% of 140.</p>	<p>The exact evaluation framework will be determined through public engagement. Anticipated examples include:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Periodic reports from subaward contractors indicating the total number and names of producers they have purchased food that meet the definition of 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Ensuring that socially disadvantaged farmers are aware of the LFPA program and can connect with entities that are applying for funds will require significant outreach and engagement. - Collecting demographic data from farms who don't have a relationship

		<p>“socially disadvantaged.”</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Site visits to contracted organizations. 	<p>with the MDA may prove difficult due to lack of trust with the agency. Centering decision making within communities aims to start building more trusting relationships between farmers and MDA.</p>
1.c	<p>We determined that at minimum 51% of the funds available would go toward food procurement as indicated by the requirements of the grant.</p>	<p>The exact evaluation framework will be determined through public engagement. Anticipated examples include:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Periodic reports from subaward contractors indicating the dollar amount of food purchases made from producers that meet the definition of “local and regional.” - Site visits to contracted organizations. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Requiring contractors to provide regular updates and data may pose barriers due to limited staff capacity at these organizations. Community engagement will help establish a process that will be easy and efficient for contracted entities.
1.d	<p>Based on the need to use at minimum 51% of the total available funds for local food purchasing, we also aim to use at minimum 51% of those food purchasing funds to purchase from farmers who meet the definition of socially disadvantaged.</p>	<p>The exact evaluation framework will be determined through public engagement. Anticipated examples include:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Periodic reports from subaward contractors indicating the dollar amount of food purchases made from producers that meet the definition of “socially disadvantaged” - Site visits to contracted organizations. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Collecting demographic data from local farms may pose challenging due to data privacy concerns. By centering the request for funding within a community decision making process, we believe that community members will establish a system to ensure that farms meeting the definition of socially disadvantaged are successful in receiving funding and understand our data collection and evaluation methods and goals.
2.a	<p>We determined that at minimum 51% of the total funds available</p>	<p>The exact evaluation framework will be determined through public</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - The degree to which subcontracts for contracted organizations

	would go toward food procurement as indicated by the requirements of the grant. We have therefore allocated a minimum of 1.4 million in procurement funding for sub-contracting to work with 30 distribution entities.	engagement. Anticipated examples include: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Periodic reports from subaward contractors indicating the dollar amount of total food purchases - Internal budget reports tracking MDA distribution of funds for food procurement 	will include funding for transportation and storage costs, along with procurement costs, will be determined based on input from public engagement. We won't know final numbers until September 2022.
2.b	Our focus on community engagement to do appropriate outreach about this opportunity is designed to support the allocation of at minimum 75% of funds to organizations working with underserved communities.	The exact evaluation framework will be determined through public engagement. Anticipated examples include: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Periodic reports from subaward contractors indicating the dollar amount of food purchases that are distributed to entities that meet the definition of "underserved communities." - Site visits to contracted organizations. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Additional funding and staff time, outside of the USDA LFPA funds, will need to be identified to support outreach and engagement during summer 2022 to support the success of this objective. - Requiring contractors to provide regular updates and data may pose barriers due to limited staff capacity at these organizations. Community engagement will provide input on establishing a process that will be easy and efficient for contracted entities.
2.c	We determined 30 entities would be a feasible number of contracts to establish, manage and still provide enough funding for it to be worthwhile to the entity and to farms.	The exact evaluation framework will be determined through public engagement. Anticipated examples include: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Periodic reports from subaward contractors indicating the dollar amount of food purchases that are distributed to entities that meet the definition of "underserved communities." 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Requiring contractors to provide regular updates and data may pose barriers due to limited staff capacity at these organizations. Community engagement will provide input on establishing a process that will be easy and efficient for contracted entities.

		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Site visits to contracted organizations. 	
2.d	<p>We aligned this number to our final project outcome of 75% of all purchases distributed to underserved communities.</p>	<p>The exact evaluation framework will be determined through public engagement. Anticipated examples include:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Periodic reports from subaward contractors indicating the dollar amount of food purchases that are distributed to entities that meet the definition of “underserved communities.” - Site visits to contracted organizations. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Collecting demographic data from local farms may pose challenging due to data privacy concerns. Community engagement will provide input on establishing a process that will be easy and efficient for contracted entities.
3.1	<p>We estimate at minimum 75% of purchases will result in new marketing opportunities and 20% will likely be sustained. This estimate is based on what we know from the scale and current market channels that stakeholder organizations operate.</p>	<p>The exact evaluation framework will be determined through public engagement. Anticipated examples include:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Periodic reports from subaward contractors indicating the number and names of producers that meet the definition of “local and regional,” and a) if they have purchased food from that producer before, and b) if they plan to purchase food from them again in the future. - Site visits to contracted organizations. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Requiring contractors to provide regular updates and data may pose barriers due to limited staff capacity at these organizations. Community engagement will provide input on establishing a process that will be easy and efficient for contracted entities. - We anticipate that many of the contracted entities may be new to this work or have limited capacity to sustain purchases from farms in the absence of LFPA funding. Our hope is that by working directly with community to determine how funds are allocated we can support entities in establishing new

			relationships with farms and that some of the may be able to distribute food to other markets beyond those served during the LFPA program.
3.2a	We estimate at minimum 75% of purchases from socially disadvantaged farmers will result in new marketing opportunities and 20% will likely be sustained based on what we know about where and how these farmers are already marketing their products and based on input from stakeholders that shaped 3.2b knowing that demonstrated ability to fulfil a contract is significant for acquiring loans and accessing new markets.	The exact evaluation framework will be determined through public engagement. Anticipated examples include: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Periodic reports from subaward contractors indicating the number and names of producers that meet the definition of “socially disadvantaged,” and a) if they have purchased food from that producer before, and b) if they plan to purchase food from them again in the future. - Site visits to contracted organizations. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Lack of data on where socially disadvantaged farmers sell their products makes it difficult to establish a baseline to measure against though the Cooperative Partnership data can start to provide a foundation. - Collecting demographic data from local farms may pose challenging due to data privacy concerns. By centering the request for funding within a community decision making process, we believe that community members will establish a system to ensure that farms meeting the definition of socially disadvantaged are successful in receiving funding and understand our data collection and evaluation methods and goals.
3.2b	We estimate that contracted entities will establish formal contracts with at minimum 50% of farmers meeting the definition of “socially disadvantaged”.	The exact evaluation framework will be determined through public engagement. Anticipated examples include: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - One-time report from subaward contractors indicating the number of formal contracts they established with farmers meeting the 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Based on stakeholder feedback, we know how important it is for farms to be able to demonstrate their ability to fulfil contracts. We also know that contracting is not always the norm for local and regional food purchasing. We hope through community

		definition of “socially disadvantaged”.	engagement, we can begin to create pathways that can normalize this process to support long-term access to financing and markets for farms.
3.3	We estimate at minimum 75% of purchases will be distributed beyond current food distribution networks to serve underserved communities and 20% will likely be sustained. This is based on what we know about current food distribution networks and their capacity to scale.	Periodic reports from subaward contractors indicating the total dollar amount food purchases distributed to recipients that serve “underserved communities, and if each of those recipients a) receives TEFAP money or food, and b) if the recipient plans to purchase food from the same supplier(s) in the future.	- Requiring contractors to provide regular updates and data may pose barriers due to limited staff capacity at these organizations. Community engagement will provide input on establishing a process that will be easy and efficient for contracted entities.
4.a	Evaluation will be done with the 30 distribution locations contracted through LFPA funding, the 140 farmers sourcing to them, in addition to members of the Statewide Cooperative Partnership.	The exact evaluation framework will be determined through public engagement. Anticipated examples include: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Collaboratively develop a process to streamline data collection and reporting for LFPA funds in a way that builds trust and relationships with the MDA. - Needs assessment for local and regional food system infrastructure. 	- Limited support for a streamlined software system for data collection and reporting. MDA staff is exploring the opportunity to access funding for software currently used by other agency programs. This is true for all outcomes on the grant.
4.b	Evaluation will be done with the 19 members of the Emerging Farmers Working Group and other stakeholders who participate in the community engagement process throughout the life of the grant program.	The exact evaluation framework will be determined through public engagement. Anticipated examples include: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Quantitative and qualitative evaluation tools, such as surveys, interviews, and questionnaires with all key participants in the 	- It may be difficult to get responses from everyone who participated in the community engagement process. Letting people know from the beginning that we would like their feedback on the process will improve the response rate.

		<p>community engagement process (see left).</p>	<p>- MDA may not be able to implement some of the suggestions from the participants. Setting expectations from the beginning will help to solicit feedback without damaging relationships.</p>
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Distribution of Project Results

Describe how you will distribute the project’s results (positive and negative) to similar organizations, stakeholders, and others that may be interested in the project’s results or implementing a similar project.

The MDA will develop a webpage for this program that will include, at a minimum:

- A Frequently Asked Questions section with answers specific to the Minnesota program
- Posted document drafts for public review and input
- Profiles of funded projects
- A project evaluation dashboard to include indicator and outcome tracking for USDA reporting
- Additional evaluation and data storytelling based on input from public engagement that demonstrates the need for long term investment in local and regional food system development
- A final project report following the close of the project in 2024

Regular updates on this project will be shared through the MDA’s known communication channels including GovDelivery newsletters, social media and press releases. Outreach to stakeholders will also allow for widespread sharing of updates and resources. The public engagement process during summer 2022 will determine additional information on the formats via which the public is interested in having project results shared, the types of data and qualitative information they want to see included, and specific types of stakeholders they think are important to share results with.

Funded entities will be asked to identify stakeholders relevant to their project and communities and develop their own proposals for how they intend to distribute updates on their projects and share overall project results.

BUDGET AND JUSTIFICATION

The budget must show the total cost for the project and describe how category costs listed in the budget are determined. The budget justification must provide enough detail for AMS staff to easily understand how costs were determined and how they relate to the Project Objectives and Expected Outcomes.

The individual subaward budgets are not expected at the submission of this application; however, initiatives will be expected to provide a comprehensive plan detailing each project, associated outcomes, and applicable expenses in order to draw down on the funds associated with this line item.

Budget Summary

Expense Category	Federal Funds
Personnel	\$ 285,034
Fringe Benefits	\$ 85,703
Travel	\$ 10,000
Equipment	0
Supplies	\$ 32,000
Procurements/ Contractual/Subawards	\$ 2,256,750
Other (specify)	0
Funds used for Procurements	\$ 1,956,750
Funds used for food storage	Allocation to be determined between procurements, storage, and transportation through the RFP process in the fall of 2022.
Funds used for food transportation	-
Direct Costs Subtotal	\$ 2,669,487
Indirect Costs (Calculated on Salary and Fringe only)	\$ 90,513
Total Budget (direct + indirect)	\$2,760,000

In accordance with the Americans with Disabilities Act, this information is available in alternative forms of communication upon request by calling 651-201-6000. TTY users can call the Minnesota Relay Service at 711. The MDA is an equal opportunity employer and provider.