

Michigan Local Food Council Network Seed Grant Program
MSU Center for Regional Food Systems
Request for Proposals
Grant Period: June 11, 2018-December 14, 2018

Background and Grant Program Goal

The Michigan Local Food Council Network (MLFCN) was formed by the Michigan State University Center for Regional Food Systems (CRFS) in 2015 to provide a platform for peer-to-peer learning, through which local food councils build their individual and collective capacities to work effectively on food and food policy issues. The Network is co-convened by CRFS and ENP & Associates based out of Ann Arbor, Michigan.

Development of a set of active, high-capacity local food councils in Michigan will help address local food and food policy issues, build local food leaders, collect useful data, and accelerate progress on the goals of the Michigan Good Food Charter. Many existing and emerging Michigan local food councils rely on volunteers to conduct their work. Based on conversations with local food councils through MLFCN activities and interviews with councils, it is clear that seed grant funding will help local food councils build their capacity and accomplish their goals. In response, CRFS has developed the Michigan Local Food Council Network Seed Grant Program.

These grants provide a source for existing councils to expand their capacity and newly-forming councils to accelerate their development. The grant program also aims to increase connection and opportunities for peer-to-peer learning among Michigan's councils through participation in the MLFCN.

Grants are up to \$5,000 without matching funds and up to \$6,000 with an appropriate matching commitment of \$1,000.

Eligibility for the Seed Grant Program

Existing and developing Michigan local food councils, including food policy councils, are eligible to apply. A local food council is defined as a group of people convening on a recurring basis around a defined Michigan-based geographic area to assess and recommend practices and policies that affect one or more aspects of the food system. The council may be part of an existing organization, but funds requested must be used entirely toward the work of the council. Seed grant recipients must be a U.S. business entity located in Michigan, whether non-profit, for profit, or governmental unit, and provide a signed W-9 with a federal tax ID number upon establishment of an award. If the local food council does not have such a designation, it may enlist a Michigan-based fiduciary partner that does. The grant will not cover any fees to a fiduciary partner.

Uses for Seed Grant Funds

To respond to the unique needs of diverse Michigan communities across Michigan, the Michigan Local Food Council Network Seed Grant Program may fund a wide variety of activities. Examples include:

- Hiring staff or consultant(s) to support local food council development and/or council operations
- Conducting strategic planning
- Conducting community food systems evaluations or assessments
- Providing training for council members and/or general public on food councils, food systems, or related topics
- Supporting council implementation a food access assessment in line with the [Michigan Good Food Charter Shared Measurement](#) food access survey tool (contact [Liz Gensler](#) or [Kathryn Colasanti](#) for more information, if needed)
- Supporting councils in building internal fund development capacity or hiring consultant(s) to aid in fund development efforts
- Funding local food council members' attendance at events such as:
 - Michigan Local Food Council Network meetings (dates on [CRFS Events](#) page)
 - Other Michigan network meetings (e.g. Michigan Farm to Institution Network; Michigan Food Hub Network; Interdepartmental Collaborative Committee Food Policy Subcommittee; Healthy Kids, Healthy Michigan)
 - Site visits with local food councils in peer communities
 - Educational experiences relevant to food council goals

Seed grant funds may not be used for lobbying local, state, or federal elected officials. However, funds can support relationship-building with and education of government staff and officials, elected and appointed.

CRFS Expectations for Successful Grantees

Although seed grants can be used for a wide variety of activities, the following requirements are expected of all grantees who are awarded funds:

- A grantee council representative must attend one statewide Michigan Local Food Council Network meeting during the grant period. Meeting locations will vary across the state to facilitate travel. This is a great opportunity to network and learn from other councils. Travel costs (e.g., mileage, hotel) for those representatives may be included in the grant request;
- Grantees are expected to participate in at least three of the monthly Michigan Local Food Council Network phone/video conferences during the grant period;
- Grantees are expected to commit to being both “a teacher and a learner” with other Michigan local food councils, sharing their learnings with the network and/or other grantees and engaging with other network members;
- Councils funded by seed grants are expected to prioritize equity in their work, and council membership should reflect the racial and ethnic diversity of the community or communities it serves;
- Grantees must be willing to be interviewed and/or complete one or two surveys about lessons learned (conducted by Good Food Charter project evaluators);
- Grantees are expected to connect with the [Michigan Good Food Charter Shared Measurement project](#) and/or other community data collection efforts (e.g., community health assessment), to the extent that the council is engaged in data collection; and
- Grantees must submit a brief report on project outcomes within one month of the end of the grant, as well as a mid-term update.

Proposal Guidelines

Your seed grant proposal should be no more than five pages and contain the following information:

1. Seed Grant Project Title

20 words maximum and should include the geographic area this local food council serves (county or city name, or region, such as Northeast Lower Michigan, or Upper Peninsula).

2. Contact Information

Name, address, e-mail, and phone number of primary contact person, and name and e-mail address of the director of the fiscal agency and website and/or social media site of the organization acting as the fiscal agent. Director of the fiscal agency may be the same person as the primary contact person.

3. Overall seed grant goal

An overall goal for this seed grant in a single, concise sentence. If there is more than one goal, please list each goal separately. A goal is the desired result you want to see as a result of your strategies (activities), such as increased understanding of local and state food policies by food entrepreneurs.

4. Background

Brief history of your council and information on the local food landscape in the area your council serves (this could be qualitative and/or quantitative).

Include information on the demographic makeup of your council's community and how your council currently engages or will work to engage representatives who reflect those demographics (whether with these grant funds or others). Recent demographic information can be found in the 2016 American Community Survey at factfinder.census.gov.

5. Project description

A brief overview of the local food council challenge these funds will address, its overall goal, and a statement of your council's need for these funds to achieve this goal.

6. Strategies to achieve the goal(s)

A list of the strategies you will use to achieve the project goal or goals. Strategies are activities, like completing a food assessment, hiring a coordinator, or convening a workshop. If your council plans to use consultants for ongoing facilitation or management, we encourage you to consider hiring from within your community or region.

7. Timeframe for strategies

A simple timeline (e.g., by season, quarter, or month) that explains when you will execute your strategies. Seed grants funds must be spent by December 31, 2018.

8. Budget

A concise itemized budget with the following categories:

- Personnel
- Travel, as applicable (please include travel expenses for representative(s) to attend at least one in-person Michigan Local Food Council Network meeting)
- Meeting expenses (for meetings convened by your council - room rental, food, etc.)
- Supplies and materials
- Other

Indirect costs cannot be included in your seed grant proposal. Funds cannot be used for purchase of vehicles, land, major equipment, or buildings. All dollars requested in the budget must have a direct link to the work of the existing or formation of the new local food council. Re-granting of these dollars is not allowed. Travel expenses (e.g., mileage) to attend MLFCN meetings are allowable, but the grant will not compensate a council member for his/her time in attending those meetings.

9. Connection to Network

Briefly describe how your council will share its learnings from the seed grant period with the MLFCN and its members. Possible forms this could take are creating a one-page “how-to” guide, presenting learnings or taking participants on field trip at an in-person MLFCN meeting your council hosts, or presenting on a monthly phone/video conference.

10. Brief Biographical Information

A short, one-paragraph biographical sketch for each of the following:

- the person who will lead coordination of the local food council;
- at least two or more other key active members of the council; and
- the author or authors of the proposal (this person may be the same as the coordinator or active members; please include only one biographical sketch for each person).

11. Letters of Support (these do not count toward page limit)

One to two letters of support are recommended, but not required. If included, a letter of support should be from an existing food council member or, in the case of forming council, someone other than the principal person(s) working to establish the council, explaining why the existing or forming council needs the resources.

Other Important Seed Grant Proposal Considerations

- MLFCN in-person and monthly phone/videoconference meeting schedules can be found at http://foodsystems.msu.edu/our-work/local_food_council_network/events;
- The grant term is six months (June-December 2018);
- A council will be awarded only one grant in a 12-month period;
- You may request up to \$5,000 without any matching funds. You may apply for up to \$6,000 with a \$1,000 matching fund commitment. We will match the \$1,000, if funded. You must provide documentation of a commitment from a community foundation, local unit of government or other funding source toward the work of your council in your proposal.

- CRFS will issue a news release with the list of all Michigan Local Food Council Network Seed Grantees awarded through this RFP in a timely manner after you have been notified of funding decision. We ask that you coordinate any local news releases with this news release by CRFS.
- Grantees must submit a brief mid-term update halfway through the grant year and a short report on project outcomes within one month of the end of the grant;
- Grantees will receive half of the seed grant funds at the start of the grant and half after submitting the mid-term update.

Proposal Submission and Review

- Proposals are due by **5:00 pm on Thursday, May 17, 2018;**
- Proposals must be no more than five pages long (excluding letters of support), in the form of single document, single-spaced, 12-point font; and
- Proposals must be e-mailed as an attachment to Liz Gensler at gensler@msu.edu; a confirmation e-mail will be sent within 48 hours of receiving your proposal.
- Proposals will be reviewed by a team with food council experience coordinated by CRFS.
- You will receive notice of a decision of your proposal within 30 days of the proposal due date.

Evaluation Criteria

The following questions will be used to evaluate the proposals:

- Is there a clear relationship between the council's proposed activities and the grant program goals?
- Is the council as representative as possible of the demographics of the geographic community/region it serves? If it is not currently, how will the council be taking steps to become more representative?
- Does the proposal include clear and realistic:
 - goal(s)
 - strategies
 - timeframes
 - budget
- Is there a clear demonstration of need for resources?
- Is there willingness demonstrated in the proposal to work with CRFS on grant award expectations?
 - Attend Michigan Local Food Council Network in-person and remote meetings;
 - Share learnings with the network;
 - Ensure council membership reflects the ethnic and racial diversity of the community or communities it serves;
 - Participate in evaluation interview and/or surveys about lessons learned;
 - Connect with community data collection efforts as applicable; and
 - Submit mid-term and final reports.
- Does the proposal include thorough responses to each of the sections listed under "Proposal Guidelines"?
- Was the proposal sent in the requested format and received on time?

For more information or questions, contact Liz Gensler at gensler@msu.edu.