

MICHIGAN LOCAL FOOD COUNCIL NETWORK SEED GRANT PROGRAM REQUEST FOR PROPOSALS

Grant Period: October 1, 2019 - September 30, 2020

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 Carlisle Wortman Associates, Inc. based out of Ann Arbor, Michigan.

Development of a connected 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 collective goals of the Michigan Good Food Charter. Many existing and emerging Michigan local food councils rely on volunteers to conduct their work. Conversations with local food councils through MLFCN activities and interviews with councils have indicated that seed grant funding will help local food councils build their capacity and accomplish their goals. In response, CRFS developed the Michigan Local Food Council Network Seed Grant Program.

These grants, up to \$5,000, 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. Based on input from the Network, these grants could be used for:

- Hiring staff or consultant(s) to support local food council development and/or council operations
- Supporting councils in building internal fund development capacity or hiring consultant(s) to aid in fund development
- 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
- Expenses to facilitate equitable participation in food council events or activities, such as:
 - Provision of child care at events or activities
 - Provision of food at events or activities
 - Stipends

- Funding via stipends, mileage reimbursements or per diem food expenses for local food council members' attendance at events such as:
 - o Michigan Local Food Council Network meetings
 - o Other Michigan network meetings (e.g. Michigan Farm to Institution; Michigan Food Hub Network; Healthy Kids, Healthy Michigan annual or Policy Action Team meetings)
 - o Site visits with local food councils in peer communities
 - o 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.

Process and Timeline

MLFCN is using a participatory gifting model to involve Network participants in a fair, equitable and collaborative funding decision. This process will include applicant council representatives and members of other (non-applicant) councils in the review team. Questions and feedback on applicant proposals will be central to the review process and applicants will be asked to revise proposals based on that input. When proposals are finalized, the review team will recommend an allocation of the total pot of funds (\$20,000) across projects. Some projects may not be funded or may be funded at less than their requested amount. Review team members will determine the most effective distribution of funds to support both individual council goals and contribute to the learning and strength of the Network as a whole.

The timeline for this process is:

July 18, 2019	Nominations for review team and grant requests due
July 19-22, 2019	Review team representatives contacted and meeting dates set
July 19-24, 2019	MLFCN facilitators review grant requests for completeness and ask for clarifications
July 24-26	Review team receives grant funding requests for review
August 5-8, 2019	Zoom meeting of review team & applicant council representatives: Sharing of projects, questions and requests. Feedback and suggestions will be provided to applicants councils, who may revise requests based on this input. Exact time and date to be determined in late June.
August 19, 2019	Revised grant requests due

August 20-21, 2019	MLFCN facilitators review revised requests for completeness
August 22-23	Review team receives revised funding requests for review
August 28-Sept 5, 2019	Zoom meeting of review team & applicant council representatives: Review of updated grant requests, allocation of funding. Exact time and date to be determined in late June.
September 12, 2019	Grants announced
October 1, 2019	Grant period starts
April 30, 2020	Mid-point reports due
September 30, 2020	Grant period ends
October 31, 2020	Final report due

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 nonprofit, 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.

CRFS Expectations for Successful Grantees

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

- A grantee council representative must attend at least two of the three to four statewide Michigan Local Food Council Network meetings anticipated during the grant year. 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 five of the monthly Michigan Local Food Council Network phone/video conferences during the grant year;
- Grantees are expected to commit to 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 CRFS 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

Proposals should be succinct, using the application form, and include:

- A brief description of food council activity in your area, including information on local community involvement/support
- A description of how the council engages diverse stakeholders and is (or working to become) representative of the community it serves
- A brief description of proposed project
- Identification of intended outcomes with measures (these can be simple)
- Work plan with timeframes and active partners
- A description of how this proposal will strengthen your council's participation in the Network
- Budget, including funds from other sources and what percentage of your total budget would be funds from the MLFCN grant
- Contact information for council and, if applicable, fiscal agent
- Designation of council representative to the grant review team

In addition, 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 how the existing or forming council and/or community would benefit from the resources.

Other Important Seed Grant Proposal Considerations

- MLFCN in-person and monthly phone/videoconference meeting schedules can be found at foodsystems.msu.edu/our-work/local_food_council_network/events.
- The grant term is approximately one year (October 1, 2019-September 30, 2020).
- Only one grant per council per year will be awarded.
- You may request up to \$5,000. Final grant award amounts will be collaboratively determined by the review team.
- Awards will be determined through a participatory grantmaking process (with the review team comprised of applicants and other council representatives). Applicants may be asked to adjust their request based on the needs or suggestions of others.
- 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.

Nominations for Review Team

We intend for the review team to be representative of the racial and economic diversity of Michigan and its councils. Any local food council participating in the Michigan Local Food Council Network through attendance at meetings, participation in conference calls and/or receiving or applying for previous seed grants are welcome to nominate a single representative of their council for the review team; this can be oneself or another member. Councils applying for the current seed grant funding will designate one representative to the review team within their request for funding. Review team members must be active participants in a council, but do not have to be current or former leaders or staff of the council.

All review team members will be provided a \$50 stipend to acknowledge the time they contribute to reviewing requests and meeting.

Nominations should be submitted via Google form at <https://forms.gle/YPyzNn38idkNSNeL7> and include:

- Name of food council
- Name of nominee
- Role of nominee in food council

- How nominee represents the diversity of the community of the local food council
- E-mail and phone number of nominee
- Nominee's availability for review team meetings up to four hours August 5-8 and August 28-September 5, 2019.

Submission and Review

- Proposals and review team nominations are due by **6:00 pm on Thursday, July 18, 2019**.
- Grant funding applicants should complete the MLFCN Seed Grant Request for Funding form, available on the CRFS website at foodsystems.msu.edu/news/michigan-local-food-council-seed-grant-rfp-2019.
- Review team nominations (for representatives from councils not submitting funding requests) should be submitted at <https://forms.gle/YPyzNn38idkNSNeL7>.
- Proposals should 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 representatives of food councils in the MLFCN.
- You will receive notice of a decision of your proposal by September 12.

For more information or questions on the grant funding or review team nominations, contact co-coordinators Liz Gensler at gensler@msu.edu or Megan Masson-Minock at mmasson-minock@cwaplan.com.