

America's Healthy Food Financing Initiative Targeted Small Grants Program

2021 Request for Applications (RFA)



**Reinvestment Fund
America's Healthy Food Financing Initiative
Targeted Small Grants Program
2021 Request for Applications (RFA)**

FUNDING OPPORTUNITY TITLE

America's Healthy Food Financing Initiative Targeted Small Grants Program (HFFI TSG Program)

ANNOUNCEMENT TYPE

Initial

CATALOG OF FEDERAL DOMESTIC ASSISTANCE (CFDA) NUMBER

10.872

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

Reinvestment Fund, in its capacity as National Fund Manager for the Healthy Food Financing Initiative at USDA Rural Business-Cooperative Service, requests applications for America's Healthy Food Financing Initiative Targeted Small Grants Program (HFFI TSG Program) for 2021. At least \$4,000,000 is available for grants in 2021. Reinvestment Fund may increase the total funding if additional funds become available. The purpose of the program is to improve access to healthy foods in underserved areas, to create and preserve quality jobs, and to revitalize low-income communities. Eligible applicants include for-profit, nonprofit, and cooperatively owned businesses, institutions of higher education, state and local governments and tribal governments. Applicants may include food retailers or non-retail food enterprises. Grants will be available to eligible organizations in eligible underserved areas to implement a project that is designed to improve access to fresh, healthy food through food retail. While the HFFI TSG Program is designed to support projects that respond to food access and food enterprise needs that were evolving prior to the COVID-19 outbreak, we recognize the impact that the COVID-19 pandemic is having on communities, retail outlets, and the food supply chain. Applicants may use their discretion to propose a project that otherwise meets program guidelines, and is or is not related to recovery from the pandemic, directly or indirectly.

Technical assistance (TA) will be available for eligible organizations that are in a planning phase or early stage of a food enterprise (including retail) project, and where TA expert guidance would further clarify and advance a project that supports HFFI goals and priorities. Applicants interested in TA may read more about TA programs at www.investinginfood.com/technical-assistance

This notice identifies the objectives for HFFI TSG Program, deadline dates, funding information, eligibility criteria for projects and applicants, and application requirements and associated instructions needed to apply for an HFFI TSG Program grant.

DATES

Letters of Interest (LOIs) must be received by **11:59 pm Eastern Time on Tuesday, December 7, 2021.**

Eligible applicants will be invited to submit a full application. Applications will be due 45 days after invitations are sent.

HFFI PROGRAM CONTACT:

Molly Hartman, Program Director, Healthy Food Financing Initiative

Olivia Chatman, Program Associate, Food Initiatives

Website: www.investinginfood.com

Email: help@investinginfood.com

Phone: 215-574-5862 (Please leave a voicemail if the phone line isn't answered. Someone will respond to your inquiry as soon as possible).

Address

Reinvestment Fund

Attn: Healthy Food Financing Initiative

1700 Market Street, 19th Floor

Philadelphia, PA 19103

WEBINAR

A webinar will be held for potential applicants at 2:00 PM Eastern Time on October 13, 2021. No registration is required. To join the webinar, go to: <https://bit.ly/HFFIWebinar101321> at 2:00 PM Eastern Time on October 13, 2021.

Reinvestment Fund will record and post the webinar, as well as answers to questions asked during the webinar, at www.investinginfood.com.

KEY DATES



To learn more about successful previous HFFI Targeted Small Grants program grantees, please visit <https://www.investinginfood.com/impact/>

REINVESTMENT FUND
America’s Healthy Food Financing Initiative
Targeted Small Grants Program
2021 Request for Applications (RFA)

Table of Contents

PART I—FUNDING OPPORTUNITY DESCRIPTION 5
Legislative Authority and Background5
Program Description.....5
Definitions6
PART II—GRANT AND ELIGIBILITY INFORMATION 8
Available Grants8
Eligibility8
What We Will Fund.....9
What We Will Not Fund11
Technical Assistance12
PART III—APPLICATION PROCESS AND TIMELINE 13
Phase 1: Letter of Interest (LOI)13
Phase 2: Application13
PART IV—SUBMITTING A LETTER OF INTEREST (LOI) AND APPLICATION 14
Applicant Requirements.....14
Letter of Interest (LOI) Requirements.....15
Application Requirements.....16
Other Application Guidelines and Funding Restrictions19
PART V—APPLICATION REVIEW 21
PART VI—GRANT AWARD ADMINISTRATION..... 23

PART I—FUNDING OPPORTUNITY DESCRIPTION

Legislative Authority and Background

This program is authorized under the Agriculture Act of 2014 (P.L. 113-79), Section 4206 - Healthy Food Financing Initiative (HFFI) and reauthorized under the Agriculture Act of 2018 (P.L. 115-334), Section 4204.

The purpose of HFFI is to improve access to healthy foods in underserved areas, to create and preserve quality jobs, and to revitalize low-income communities by providing loans and grants to eligible fresh, healthy food retailers and enterprises to overcome the higher costs and initial barriers to entry in underserved areas.

All Americans deserve access to fresh, healthy, and affordable food. Research indicates that when people have local access to fresh food, they make healthier choices about their diets, have better health outcomes, and benefit from improved local economic development. Equitable access to healthy food is enabled by a food system where enterprises across the food supply chain can thrive and deliver fresh, healthy, and affordable products. The COVID-19 pandemic has revealed how essential grocery stores, food suppliers, and their employees are to communities. The economic impact of the pandemic will only further constrain low-income families' ability to afford and access healthy food. The goal of the Healthy Food Financing Initiative is to address this critical issue by investing in food retail and food enterprises throughout the food system that contribute to improved fresh food retail access in low-income and underserved communities across the country.

HFFI is administered by a National Fund Manager. In 2017, Reinvestment Fund was appointed to serve as the National Fund Manager (NFM) for HFFI at USDA. As the NFM for HFFI, Reinvestment Fund will leverage private capital, provide financial and technical assistance to regional, state and local partnerships, and channel capital to fund eligible projects that will improve access to fresh, healthy foods in underserved rural and urban areas.

Reinvestment Fund is a national mission-driven financial institution that creates opportunity for underserved people and places through partnerships. We marshal the capital, analytics, and expertise necessary to build strong, healthy, and more equitable communities. Headquartered in Philadelphia, Reinvestment Fund has put \$2.7 billion in cumulative lending and investments to work for communities across the country since 1985. Beginning with the Pennsylvania Fresh Food Financing Initiative (FFFI) in 2004, we have developed a comprehensive and evidence-based approach to improving the food landscape for low-income people. Since that time, we have provided more than \$323 million in grants and loans to healthy food projects. Reinvestment Fund also founded ReFresh, a capacity-building initiative that is composed of CDFI partners across the country, who are among the largest national practitioners in healthy food financing.

Program Description

The purpose of America's Healthy Food Financing Initiative (HFFI) is to improve access to healthy food in underserved areas, to create and preserve quality jobs, and to revitalize low-income communities by providing financial and technical assistance to eligible fresh, healthy food retailers and enterprises to overcome the higher costs and initial barriers to entry in underserved areas. HFFI will offer funding opportunities and technical assistance to eligible applicants.

This Request for Applications (RFA) is for a Targeted Small Grants (TSG) program. The TSG program offers financial assistance in the form of grants to eligible fresh, healthy food retailers and enterprises.

The TSG program supports innovative fresh food retail and food system enterprises that seek to improve access to healthy food in underserved areas through food retail. Grants could assist projects with a variety of aspects of project development, renovation, and/or expansion. Grants are designed to be one-time investments of capital into a food retail or food enterprise project in order to address higher costs and initial barriers to entry in underserved rural and urban areas. Grant funds should unlock additional sources of capital, catalyze project sustainability, meet financing gaps, and/or enable deeper impact or project reach.

In conjunction with the TSG program, Reinvestment Fund will also provide Technical Assistance (TA) to support selected early-stage projects where resources would help build local capacity to develop a food retail outlet or enterprise and would clarify or advance an eligible project.

Definitions

COMMUNITY FOOD ASSESSMENT: A collaborative and participatory process that systematically examines a broad range of community food issues and assets, so as to inform change actions to make the community more food secure.

FOOD ENTERPRISES: “Food Enterprises” are businesses or organizations along the food supply chain such as food hubs; food producers, distributors, processors, and manufacturers; commercial kitchens and food business incubators; mobile markets; and other direct to consumer markets. Food Enterprises do not necessarily involve the direct sale of food to consumers

HEALTHY FOOD(S): The term “Healthy Food(s)” will have the same meaning as used by the CDFI Fund— nutrient-dense foods and beverages as set forth in the USDA Dietary Guidelines for Americans 2020-2025 including health-promoting beverages and foods – including vegetables, fruits, whole grains, seafood, eggs, beans, peas, lentils, unsalted nuts and seeds, fat-free and low-fat dairy products, and lean meats and poultry that are prepared with little to no added sugars, saturated fat, and sodium, and provide vitamins and minerals. (See USDA Dietary Guidelines: <https://www.dietaryguidelines.gov/>).

LOW-INCOME COMMUNITIES: As defined by the CDFI Fund under the 2018 CDFI Program, the term “Low-Income” means income, adjusted for family size, of not more than:

- 1) For Metropolitan Areas, 80 percent of the area median family income; and
- 2) For non-Metropolitan Areas, the greater of:
 - i. 80 percent of the area median family income; or
 - ii. 80 percent of the statewide non-Metropolitan Area median family income

MODERATE INCOME COMMUNITIES: As defined by the CDFI Fund under the 2018 CDFI Program, the term “Moderate Income” means income, adjusted for family size, of not more than:

- 1) For Metropolitan Areas, 120 percent of the area median family income; and
- 2) For non-Metropolitan Areas, the greater of:
 - i. 120 percent of the area median family income; or
 - ii. 120 percent of the statewide non-Metropolitan Area median family income

NATIONAL FUND MANAGER (NFM): Per 7 U.S.C. § 6954(b)(3): The term “National Fund Manager” means a community development financial institution that is –

- (A) in existence on the date of enactment of this section; and
- (B) certified by the Community Development Financial Institution Fund of the Department of Treasury to manage the Initiative for purposes of:
 - i. raising private capital;
 - ii. providing financial and technical assistance to partnerships; and

- iii. funding eligible projects to attract fresh, healthy food retailers to underserved areas, in accordance with this section.

PERISHABLE FOOD: As defined in Section 4206 of the Agricultural Act of 2014, the term “Perishable Food” means a staple food that is fresh, refrigerated, or frozen.

QUALITY JOB: As defined in Section 4206 of the Agricultural Act of 2014, the term “Quality Job” means a job that provides wages and other benefits comparable to, or better than, similar positions in existing businesses of similar size in similar local economies.

RETAIL OUTLETS: A retail outlet that accepts benefits under the supplemental nutrition assistance program established under the Food and Nutrition Act of 2008 (7 USC 2011 et. Seq.)

RURAL AREA: The term “Rural Area” means the Rural Business Service’s rural area definition as outlined in Section 343(a)(13)(A)(i) of the Consolidated Farm and Rural Development Act which states: any area other than: (1) A city or town that has a population of greater than 50,000 inhabitants; and (2) any urbanized area contiguous and adjacent to such a city or town.

STAPLE FOOD: As defined in Section 4206 of the Agricultural Act of 2014, the term “Staple Food” means food that is a basic dietary item, which includes bread, flour; fruits; vegetables; and meat.

SUPPLEMENTAL NUTRITION ASSISTANCE PROGRAM (SNAP): means the supplemental nutrition assistance program established under the Food and Nutrition Act of 2008 (7 U.S.C. 2011 et seq).

UNDERSERVED AREAS: The term “Underserved Areas” will have the same meaning as “underserved communities,” which based on Section 6015 of the 2008 Farm Bill means a community (including an urban or rural community and an Indian tribal community) that has (I) limited access to affordable, Healthy Foods, including fresh fruits and vegetables, in grocery retail stores or farmer-to-consumer direct markets; and (II) a high rate of hunger or food insecurity or a high poverty rate. For the purpose of satisfying the project requirements for the Initiative an underserved area must either: 1) Be a Census tract determined to be a Low-Income and Low-Supermarket-Access Census Tract by the United States Department of Agriculture in its Food Access Research Atlas; 2) Be a Census tract adjacent to a Census tract determined to be a Low-Income and Low-Supermarket-Access Census Tracts by the United States Department of Agriculture in its Food Access Research Atlas; which has a median family income less than or equal to 120 percent of the applicable Area Median Family Income; or 3) Be a Geographic Unit as defined in 12CFR Part 1805.201(b)(3)(ii)(B), which—

- i. Individually meets at least one of the criteria in 12CFR Part 1805.201(b)(3)(ii)(D), and
- ii. Meets the criteria as having low access to supermarket or grocery store through a methodology that has been adopted for use by another government or philanthropic healthy food initiative.

VERY LOW-INCOME COMMUNITIES: As defined by the CDFI Fund under the 2018 CDFI Program, the term “Very-Low Income” means income, adjusted for family size, of not more than:

- 1) For Metropolitan Areas, 50 percent of the area median family income; and
- 2) For non-Metropolitan Areas, the greater of:
 - i. 50 percent of the area median family income; or
 - ii. 50 percent of the statewide non-Metropolitan Area median family income

PART II—GRANT AND ELIGIBILITY INFORMATION

Available Grants

At least \$4,000,000 is available for grants for the 2021 HFFI Targeted Small Grants (TSG) program. Grant awards may be from \$20,000 - \$200,000. We expect to make 20-30 grant awards. Total funding may be increased, and more grants awarded, if additional funds become available. In 2020, we received 446 Letters of Interest (LOIs), 245 submitted applications, and awarded 20 projects a total of \$3 million in grant awards.

Eligibility

The TSG program will provide grants to eligible organizations in eligible Underserved Areas to implement a project that is designed to improve access to fresh, Healthy Food through food retail. The program will support projects aiming to strengthen, expand, and innovate within the food retail supply chain. The program could assist a variety of organizations, business models, and capital needs of ventures that process, distribute, aggregate, market, and sell healthy, fresh, and affordable foods to underserved communities and markets.

Eligible Organizations

- For-profit business enterprises (including a corporation, limited liability company, sole proprietor, public benefit corporation)
- Cooperatively-owned businesses
- Tax-exempt nonprofit corporations
- Institutions of higher education
- State and local governments and governmental agencies, authorities, commissions and food policy councils
- Tribal governments and tribal governmental agencies, authorities, and food policy councils

Individuals are not eligible.

Partners and Collaborators

Applicants are encouraged to seek and create partnerships with public or private, nonprofit or for-profit entities, and/or other appropriate professionals, community-based organizations, and local government entities. Only the applicant must meet the eligibility requirements. Project partners and collaborators need not meet the eligibility requirements. Award recipients may subaward to organizations not eligible to apply provided such organizations are necessary for the successful completion of the project.

Eligible Locations

Applicants must propose a project in an eligible underserved area in order to be eligible for the program. Projects in underserved urban and Rural Areas are eligible. Underserved Areas, defined earlier in this RFA, means a community that has (I) limited access to affordable, Healthy Foods, including fresh fruits and vegetables, in grocery retail stores or farmer-to-consumer direct markets; and (II) a high rate of hunger or food insecurity or a high poverty rate. For the purposes of the TSG program, a project must be located:

1. In a Census tract determined to be a Low-Income and Low-Supermarket-Access Census Tract by the United States Department of Agriculture in its Food Access Research Atlas;
2. OR in a Census tract adjacent to a Census tract determined to be a Low-Income and Low-Supermarket-Access Census Tracts by the United States Department of Agriculture in its Food Access Research Atlas; and which has a median family income less than or equal to 120 percent of the applicable Area Median Family Income;
3. OR in a Geographic Unit as defined in 12CFR Part 1805.201(b)(3)(ii)(B), which—

- A. Individually meets at least one of the criteria in 12CFR Part 1805.201(b)(3)(ii)(D), *and*
- B. Meets the criteria as having low access to supermarket or grocery store through a methodology that has been adopted for use by another government or philanthropic healthy food initiative.

More information, including data and maps available to help determine if a proposed location is eligible, is available at <https://www.investinginfood.com/eligibility/>. If you are unsure if a location is eligible, or have questions about location eligibility, please contact us. Contact information can be found on page 3 of this RFA.

NOTE: The 2021 Healthy Food Financing Initiative (HFFI) Targeted Small Grants Program geographic eligibility requirements have been updated to reflect the most recent Low Income, Low Supermarket Access (LILA) census tract-level data from the 2021 United States Department of Agriculture (USDA) Food Access Research Atlas. As a result, some applicants who were previously eligible under the HFFI 2019 and 2020 RFA may no longer be located in census-tracts that are eligible Underserved Areas for the 2021 Targeted Small Grants Program grant round.

What We Will Fund

The TSG Program will provide grants to eligible organizations in eligible Underserved Areas to implement a project that is designed to improve access to fresh, Healthy Food through food retail. The program will support projects aiming to strengthen, expand, and innovate within the food retail supply chain. The program could assist a variety of organizations, business models, and capital needs of ventures that process, distribute, aggregate, market, and sell healthy, fresh, and affordable foods to underserved communities and markets. Applicants may be a variety of different kinds of organizations or businesses, but applications should demonstrate how funding will support the creation, expansion, or retention of a food retail or food enterprise business model. Applicants must demonstrate how their proposed project will contribute to food access through the availability of Staple and Perishable Foods for retail sale.

The TSG program seeks to primarily support Retail Outlets or Food Enterprises within the food retail supply chain that meet the eligibility requirements described in this section of the RFA. For example, a retailer or developer might seek grant funding as a portion of an overall capital project to build a new grocery store or renovate a portion of an existing store, in order to retain or expand access to full-service grocery stores in an Underserved Area. A community-based nonprofit organization or cooperative might seek funding for predevelopment and materials to develop an alternative or non-traditional retail distribution model such as a pop-up retail outlet in a low-population community that has limited access to fresh foods. A retail applicant might seek funds to expand e-commerce or delivery options as a result of the COVID-19 pandemic. A food enterprise applicant might seek funding for equipment to expand their produce distribution company in order to improve and expand food access at a number of Retail Outlets. We seek applications from these types of projects and many others not described here.

Eligible Projects

To be eligible for consideration for a grant from the TSG Program, applicants must describe a project that fulfills the following criteria:

1. Plans to expand or preserve the availability of Staple and Perishable Foods in Underserved Areas (defined in Part I) with low- and moderate-income populations (defined in Part I); and

2. If the project involves retail sales, accepts or plans to accept benefits under the Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program (SNAP) established under the Food and Nutrition Act of 2008 (7 USC 2011 et. Seq.).

Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program (SNAP)

General questions about SNAP and EBT should be directed to AskUSDA via <https://ask.usda.gov/s/contactsupport>. This system can provide prompt answers for general SNAP inquiries. You can read more about the SNAP authorization process and apply for authorization online at <https://www.fns.usda.gov/snap/retailer-apply>. SNAP regulations allow 45 days from receipt of a completed application for a decision to be made.

Staple and Perishable Foods

As defined in Part I of this RFA, Staple Foods mean basic dietary items such as bread, flour, fruits, vegetables and meat. Perishable Foods mean Staple Foods that are fresh, refrigerated, or frozen. More information about Staple and Perishable Foods is available at <https://fns-prod.azureedge.net/sites/default/files/snap/SNAP-Staple-Foods.pdf>. Applicants should demonstrate that their proposed project will expand or preserve the availability of Staple and Perishable Foods in Underserved Areas, either through the direct retail sales of Staple and Perishable Foods to consumers, or through a food enterprise that will contribute through the food system or food supply chain to the availability of Staple and Perishable Foods through retail sales. For example, Food Enterprise projects could speak to the product mix and estimated quantities of Staple and Perishable Foods from their project—and downstream at Retail Outlets—that would be made newly available or for which availability would be preserved for target communities.

Proposed projects could include (but are not limited to):

- **Predevelopment:** Projects should be ready for implementation or shovel-ready when applying for HFFI TSG Program grant funding, but grant needs can include predevelopment and soft costs, including market analysis, site location analysis, appraisals, architectural or design assistance, training, or other contractual or consulting uses.
- **Brick and Mortar Facility Development:** Hard capital costs including land or building acquisition; construction; and fixtures, furniture, and equipment for the construction, renovation, or expansion of a brick and mortar facility.
- **Other capital needs:** Hard costs for the creation, retrofit, expansion, or other one-time investment in capital needs for a retail operation or enterprise that isn't for facility, including vehicles, machinery, equipment, technology, software, purchase of existing business assets, a one-time investment in inventory or raw materials, or other.
- **Other soft costs:** One-time soft costs such as training, consumer/community engagement, governance support, financial or development consultants, project management, marketing and merchandising work, environmental/energy assessments, food safety assistance, project learning and/or impact assessment, and other one-time soft costs that contribute to preserving or expanding access to food retail.

We encourage applications that demonstrate:

- **Sustainability:** Project applications that request assistance to facilitate the implementation of an economically sustainable project, i.e. not primarily dependent on uncommitted sources of revenue, after the grant period is over.
- **Community Involvement:** Project applications with diverse and relevant partnerships and collaborations where the project design and operation plan reflects the inclusion of stakeholder communities and targeted beneficiaries.

- **Innovation:** Project applications that aim to test, scale, and/or demonstrate new, emerging, outside the box, creative and/or alternative approaches to addressing food retail access challenges.
- **Replicability:** Project applications that include approaches to preserving or expanding access to food retail that might be replicated or scaled in other communities.
- **Project Readiness:** Project applications that demonstrate a well-thought out, planned project that is ready for implementation but for the requested assistance.
- **Unlocking Capital Access:** Project applications where grant funds would enable the applicant to access additional sources of capital to fund their project, including debt finance and/or other sources of public or private capital.

What We Will Not Fund

- **Agriculture-Only Projects:** Projects that are exclusively limited to food production, including gardening, farming, ranching, hydroponics, aquaponics, vertical farms, or other agricultural activities are not eligible. Educational or community enterprises (i.e. community gardens, educational gardens, or other gardens whose harvest is for self-use) and productive farms either whose harvest is primarily for self-use or for sale are not eligible. Projects that include growing or production as well as downstream food supply chain activities including distribution and sale will be eligible, as long as grant funds are primarily to support supply chain activities.
- **Charitable Food:** Projects that are primarily about supporting programs where food is given for free, such as food pantries, food banks, meals programs, and food donations, are not eligible. Organizations that engage in charitable food donation are eligible to apply as long as funds are used to support a market-based food access project that meets the eligibility requirements described earlier in this RFA.
- **Nutrition Education:** This program will not directly support programs that are educational in nature about nutrition, culinary skills, or the food system. Educational activities and/or training may be a part of a larger program through partnerships, or through a larger budget that is primarily focused on food access or food enterprise.
- **Restaurants:** This program will not directly support projects that are primarily focused on the sale of prepared, hot foods in a restaurant or takeaway setting to consumers. Prepared foods may be a component of an eligible food retail or food enterprise project that can also demonstrate how the proposed project will expand or preserve the availability of Staple and Perishable foods.
- **Consumer Packaged Goods:** This program will not support the startup, operation, or expansion of enterprises that produce only one or only a few consumer packaged goods, such as health food items for sale at a retail location.
- **Research:** Projects that are primarily a research study will not be eligible.
- **Operating Capital:** Grants may not be used to primarily support the ongoing operation or working capital for an existing venture. Grant funds may be used to support capital needs or expansion activities of an existing venture.
- **Regranting and Lending Activities:** Applicants seeking funding to start, operate, or expand regranting or lending programs to improve Healthy Food access will not be considered eligible. TSG Program funds may be used only for project-specific needs.
- **Food Retail Programs and Initiatives:** Applicants seeking funding to administer programs and initiatives that are primarily consulting, technical assistance activities, educational activities, or other program initiatives that are focused on supporting or coordinating retailers or food enterprises will not be considered eligible.

Grant awards will be made on the merit of the proposed project, with budget line-item eligibility considered

only after the merits of the project have been determined. Reinvestment Fund reserves the right to negotiate final budgets, including disallowing ineligible costs, with successful applicants.

Technical Assistance

To support HFFI goals, Reinvestment Fund will offer Technical Assistance (TA) to eligible organizations that are in a planning phase or early stage of a food retail or enterprise project. TA is non-financial assistance provided by specialists. TA will be provided to eligible organizations where expert guidance would further clarify and advance a project that supports HFFI goals and priorities. TA resources may include support with capacity building, identification of food access needs and potential interventions, project planning, market studies, feasibility studies, business planning, financial modeling, appraisals, and community or customer engagement. TA will be provided on a merit-based, non-competitive basis to eligible beneficiaries.

Eligible applicants to the TSG Program that are not selected for funding may be selected to apply for or receive TA. Once the LOI submission period has closed, organizations interested in TA only and not grant funding may inquire about the TA program by contacting the program staff by email at:

help@investinginfood.com with the subject line: **HFFI Technical Assistance Program**.

PART III—APPLICATION PROCESS AND TIMELINE

The 2021 HFFI Targeted Small Grants (TSG) program will have a two-phased application process.

We will host an informational webinar during the LOI submission period to provide potential applicants with an overview of the RFA and application process, information on how to navigate the online submission process, and to answer questions about the program. The webinar will be on October 13, 2021. No registration is required. To join the webinar, go to: <https://bit.ly/HFFIWebinar101321> at 2:00 PM Eastern Time on October 13, 2021. Reinvestment Fund post a recording of the webinar, as well as answers to questions asked during the webinar, at www.investinginfood.com. If there are questions about the LOI before or after the webinar, please contact us. Contact information is on Page 3 of this RFA.

Phase 1: Letter of Interest (LOI)

The Letter of Interest (LOI) is the first step in the RFA process and is required for all applicants to express interest in grant funding from the TSG Program. **LOIs will be reviewed to determine applicant eligibility for the TSG program. LOIs are due no later than 11:59 pm Eastern Time on December 7, 2021.**

The LOI submission phase includes applicant information, project location(s), and a brief project summary that includes an overview of the applicant's proposed project, community involvement, organizational background, and project timeline.

Reinvestment Fund will screen all LOIs for eligibility based on submission requirements, applicant eligibility, project location, and project types. Eligible projects will be invited to submit a full application. Applicants will be contacted no earlier than January 2022 with the status of their LOI submission, and, if eligible, an invitation to submit a full application.

Phase 2: Application

Only eligible projects will be invited to submit a full application. Please do not submit a full application until you are invited to do so.

Full applications build upon the LOI submission and will require additional project information, operating projections, budget detail and budget narrative. Full applications will be due 45 days after the invitation to submit.

Applications will be evaluated and scored by a review panel based on the criteria in this RFA. Funding decisions will be made no earlier than April 2022. Selected grant award recipients will be notified of their selection electronically and should be ready to work with Reinvestment Fund to begin the Grant Agreement and funding process.

PART IV—SUBMITTING A LETTER OF INTEREST (LOI) AND APPLICATION

Only electronic submissions will be accepted in response to this RFA. This funding opportunity is administered by Reinvestment Fund, a nonprofit intermediary, and this funding opportunity will not be available on grants.gov. Applicants must use Reinvestment Fund’s online grants portal. A link will be available at www.investinginfood.com

Submissions in response to this RFA should follow the instructions in the below sections. If there is discrepancy between the information presented here and the online grants portal, the information contained in this RFA is overriding.

Applications received by email, mail, or fax will not be reviewed. Please contact us if you have any issues with the online submission process. To avoid technical issues, we encourage you to submit your application in advance of LOI and application deadlines.

Applicant Requirements

In order to submit an LOI in response to this RFA, applicants will need to provide:

Organization Information

Organization Name
Legal Entity Name
Organization Address

Contact Information

Name
Email
Phone Number
Address

DUNS Number

Applicants must have a Data Universal Number System (DUNS) Number. Organizations can obtain a number at <https://fedgov.dnb.com/webform/>. There is no cost to obtain a DUNS number. It may take 2 or more business days to obtain a DUNS number; however, applicants should request a DUNS number at least a month before the deadline, because a DUNS number is needed for SAM (defined below) registration. Reinvestment Fund cannot answer any questions about DUNS numbers.

System for Award Management (SAM) Registration

Applicants are required to maintain an active registration with the System for Award Management (SAM) until the application process is complete. If an applicant is selected to receive a grant award, SAM registration must be active throughout the life of the award.

Organizations can register with SAM at <https://sam.gov/SAM/>. SAM is an official website of the U.S. government. There is no cost to use SAM. For more information and assistance with using SAM, please review the HELP page at: <https://sam.gov/content/help> and/or contact SAM directly. Reinvestment Fund cannot answer any questions about SAM registration.

Legal Status of Applicant Entity

Applicants must identify the type of organization they are, and provide the following documentation to evidence the legal status of the entity submitting an LOI:

- Official document indicating the applicant's legal status as an entity, such as: articles of incorporation or certificate of formation (only one will be required as evidence)
- *If the applicant is a for-profit corporation*, evidence of the applicant's EIN.
- *OR If the applicant is a nonprofit organization*, proof of the applicant's nonprofit status, such as 501(c)3 certification.
- *OR If the applicant is a state, local, or tribal government or governmental agency, authority, commission, or similar*; some documentation of the agency's existence, such as documentation evidencing the agency's Tax Identification Number (TIN) or Employer Identification Number (EIN) or a "Governmental Information Letter" or similar. More information on IRS documentation of Government entities is available at: <https://www.irs.gov/government-entities/federal-state-local-governments/governmental-information-letter>

Letter of Interest (LOI) Requirements

Applicants will be required to provide the following information as a Letter of Interest (LOI) submission.

Project Name

Project Location(s) & Eligibility

Applicants must identify the to indicate the following information about their project location(s):

- Street address (or multiple addresses if relevant)
- Description of project location if one or more locations does not have a street address
- Evidence of project eligibility based on geographic location if eligibility is uncertain

Retail Sales

Applicants will be asked to identify if their project involves retail sales, and if so, if they accept or plan to accept SNAP benefits.

Project Summary (500 words)

Applicants must provide a brief narrative description of the proposed project for which they are seeking grant funding. The narrative must include the following elements:

- Description of the applicant organization, community and/or market to be served and project location.
- Project proposed, including brief overview of business model and description of sustainability of operations, need for grant assistance, and sources of revenue, and whether this is a new project or expansion of existing operation. If project involves construction, please describe the status of site control.
- Overview of project timeline, including current status, key milestones and key factors determining project feasibility and success over the next 12 or 24 months.
- Why TSG program funding is necessary to allow the project to move forward.

Project Impact (250 words)

Briefly describe the impact on food access expected as a result of doing this project. In particular, the extent to which the project will expand or preserve the availability of Staple and Perishable Foods for retail sale. This may include, if applicable, a description of the assortment of Staple and Perishable foods to be offered.

Length of Project

Applicants should propose the amount of time they will need to complete the project proposed, which would be the period of performance under the grant award. Projects may take up to 12 months if they do not involve construction; projects that include construction may take up to 24 months.

Grant Amount Requested

Grant award amounts may be from \$20,000 to \$200,000.

Use of Funds

Applicants will be asked to describe the proposed use of an HFFI grant award by selecting among the following categories. For the LOI stage, applicants will not be asked to identify exact dollar amounts for each use. Categories include:

- Predevelopment analysis (such as business model development, feasibility assessment, pro-forma development, market analysis, site location study)
- Predevelopment soft costs (such as appraisals, architectural or design assistance, professional fees or other contractual or consulting uses)
- Brick and Mortar facility development (such as land or building acquisition; construction; hard costs for the creation, retrofit, fit-out, and/or expansion of a facility)
- Equipment (including fixtures and furniture for a facility, or equipment, machinery, technology, or vehicles for an enterprise that isn't for a facility)
- One-time soft costs (such training, governance support, community engagement, marketing and merchandising, project learning and/or impact assessment)
- Inventory, materials, or other supplies
- Other (please describe)

Grant Needs

Applicants will be asked to identify if they are seeking financial assistance (grants), technical assistance (expert consulting or guidance), or both.

Application Requirements

When invited to submit, applicants will be required to provide the following information, as a supplement to the project summary and other information submitted during the LOI phase, as a full application for funding to the HFFI TSG Program.

I. Narrative

Organization Overview and Background (250 words)

Briefly describe the applicant organization, its ownership or management structure, size, and relevant project partners including supplier or buyer relationships and/or community partnerships as applicable. Please describe the applicant organization's and/or project partners' experience relevant to the success of developing and operating the proposed project.

Population, Community, and/or Market Served (500 words)

Describe the critical elements and needs of the local food environment and the community that would benefit from the proposed project. This could include brief demographics and geographic characteristics of the area or population involved with or to be served by the proposed project. Applicants could describe the market within the food economy to be served by the food retailer or food enterprise.

Applicants could draw from a Community Food Assessment or a market study to describe the challenges to access to food in this community. Most relevant is an explanation of who is to be served by this proposed project, and to what extent they are involved in project development, activities, operations, and successes.

Project Objectives, Activities, and Outcomes (750 words)

Describe the overall project for which you are seeking funding, including the community or market needs to be met; the goals of the project; the overall model, such as business model, program model, and sources of revenue and ability to cover ongoing operating expenses; project activities to be undertaken and the timeline to accomplish these activities; the specific changes (outcomes) that will occur as a result of the project, and who and what will benefit. Most relevant is why these activities were selected, and what impact on food access the applicant expects they will produce.

Need for and Use of Funds (500 words)

Describe the elements of the project for which you are seeking grant funding, and how grant funding will be used if received. Most relevant is why grant funding is needed in particular for these uses of funds, as well as what grant funding will enable for the project, and the organization. If grant funding is part of a larger set of funding sources, describe what the grant will support within the project funding structure, as well as the source of other funding or financing, and the status of other funding sources. The most successful submissions will be those that have demonstrated how grant funding will enable a sustainable project that can thrive after the grant period is over.

Project Impacts (250 words)

Impact assessment is an important component of the HFFI program overall. Reinvestment Fund seeks to collect impact metrics across all of its programs in order to assess the success of its funding initiatives. To determine and lift up best practices in food retail and food enterprise models, to inform the development of healthy food financing initiatives, and to assess the impact of each proposed project, Reinvestment Fund seeks to collect impact metrics about each project that is made possible by funds from the HFFI TSG Program.

Applicants must briefly describe the metrics of success they project for their proposed project, as applicable, such as:

- Growth in annual revenue for their organization / enterprise
- Leveraged capital – the amount of other capital supporting the project
- Square footage created – the amount of food retail space created or preserved
- Jobs to be created or preserved - the number of jobs created or retained Sales revenue – weekly or annual sales revenue, weekly basket size, percentage of sales from SNAP transactions
- Other metrics appropriate to the project’s impact

Applicants may answer the following optional questions, to describe, if applicable, their project’s impacts relating to the following program priorities:

- Will your project create or retain Quality Jobs (as defined earlier in the RFA) for low-income residents in the community? Please describe the number of jobs created or retained and job quality, including how wages and other benefits compare to similar positions in comparable businesses and economies. (100 words)
- How will your project support regional food systems and locally grown foods to the maximum extent possible? (100 words)
- If your project is in an area served by public transit, will your project be accessible by public

transit? (100 words)

- How will your project involve women- or minority-owned businesses? (100 words)

Project Timeline (500 words)

- Applicants will be asked to update from their LOI submission the amount of time they will need to complete the project proposed, which would be the period of performance under the grant award. Applicants will also be asked to provide an overview of their project's timeline, identifying key activities and milestones throughout the grant period, as well as a description of the overall project timing and relevant factors influencing project timing and success.

II. Budget

Budget

Applicants will be asked to provide a complete budget breakdown and explanation for their HFFI TSG program grant request by cost category. Describe with some detail how you arrived at the budget figures (such as quotes, estimates, or comparable figures) and the associated justification for each of the following cost categories included in your project:

Personnel

As applicable

Fringe

As applicable

Travel

As applicable

Furniture/Fixtures/Equipment

As applicable, list all purchases for items with a life span of one year or more and for all purchases above \$5,000 per each item acquired. Examples of such purchases are equipment, automobiles, real property (land and fixtures such as portable/unaffixed refrigeration, kitchen, and storage equipment, furniture, Point of Sale (POS) or computers, copy/fax machines, telephones, and software.)

Construction

As applicable, include the acquisition and/or construction and renovation of land and/or buildings. Construction budget should include a minimum of 10% contingency.

Contractual

As applicable, list all contractual services such as predevelopment soft costs, third-party consultant or design fees, trainings, etc.

Materials/Supplies:

As applicable, include short-lived items, such as paper, envelopes, pens and pencils, office supplies, marketing materials, etc.

Other Costs:

As applicable, list other costs not covered by the above categories, such as including inventory, raw materials, insurance, maintenance costs, or other.

Indirect Charges:

As applicable, you may charge up to 10 percent of total direct costs as indirect costs.

However, you must also comply with any approved negotiated indirect cost rate that you have received from the Federal government. Therefore, if your approved rate is equivalent to less than 10 percent of total direct costs, you must charge your approved rate. If your approved rate is equivalent to greater than 10 percent of total direct costs, you must charge 10 percent of total direct costs.

If you do not have an approved rate, you may elect to use the de minimis rate, which is 10 percent of modified total direct costs (MTDC). MTDC means all direct salaries and wages, applicable fringe benefits, materials and supplies, services, travel, and up to the first \$25,000 of each subaward (regardless of the period of performance of the subawards under the award). MTDC excludes equipment, capital expenditures, rental costs, scholarships and fellowships, participant support costs, and the portion of each subaward in excess of \$25,000.

III. Attachments

Operating Projections

Applicants must submit 5-year projections for the operations of the proposed Retail Outlet or Food Enterprise. Financial projections may include estimates for sales projections, gross margins and operating expenses. Projections may be high level based on best available information. Where possible, applicants should include detail concerning how you arrived at the assumptions, in addition to general sources of income. Successful projects will have projections that demonstrate the sustainability of operations beyond the grant period.

Sources and Uses

If your HFFI grant request is part of a larger project with additional sources of funding and activities, applicants must provide a budget spreadsheet summarizing the additional funding sources, the status of these funds (i.e. applied or committed), and uses of funds in the overall larger project.

Letters of Support

Letters from the key organizations involved in the project, partners, and other project stakeholders, acknowledging their support and contributions, may be provided as applicable. For projects involving real property and/or construction, letters of support to demonstrate engagement of the local community are recommended. Letters of support are not required, and applicants who do not include letters of support will not be penalized.

Other Application Guidelines and Funding Restrictions

Multiple Submissions

The HFFI Targeted Small Grants program will only accept one LOI per organization.

Changes in Applicant Primary Point of Contact

Applicants are asked to inform Reinvestment Fund regarding any changes in their HFFI grant project's primary point(s) of contact during the application period. Applicants may change their primary point of contact using the online grants portal.

Cost Sharing or Matching

There is no requirement of matching contributions or cost sharing for awarded funds. However, applicants may have other sources of funding for an overall proposed project, and should describe other sources of

cash or in-kind contributions, including any third-party in-kind contributions, including facilities, equipment, or services. Additional funding may come from State government, local government, or private sources. HFFI grant awards may not be used as match for other federal awards.

Failure to comply with these above requirements for a submission to the TSG Program may result in Reinvestment Fund determining that the applicant is not eligible to receive a grant award.

PART V—APPLICATION REVIEW

Invited applications submitted by eligible applicants will be evaluated and scored based on the criteria below. Reinvestment Fund's HFFI reviewers will base scores only on the information provided in the application. This is a competitive program, so you will receive scores based on the quality of the information provided. There are 65 total points available for the criteria, and 16 available additional points for the priority areas listed below. Each application will be scored by two reviewers, and the scores will be averaged.

The top 25% of applications will be further evaluated by the HFFI Review Panel of internal and external experts who will determine a consensus ranking of applications that will take into account the application score, project type and geographic diversity. The highest ranked application in each state will be selected for an award before a second application in that state is funded.

Applications selected for an award will be funded up to the maximum amount requested. Budgets will be reviewed and may be adjusted for allowable costs and reasonable uses of funds. For example, an equipment budget may be adjusted to reflect more reasonable prices, or construction budgets may be reduced to reflect a more reasonable scope of work. An application that cannot be fully funded with available funds may be offered partial funding at Reinvestment Fund's discretion.

A. Applicant Qualifications (0 to 10 points)

Applications will be evaluated for the applicant and project team's track record and experience in food enterprise and/or food retail industry development and management, and/or food systems or food supply chain experience. The application will be evaluated for the applicant's demonstrated ability to deliver the project described. More points will be given to applications with relevant experience, relevant partners in the project team, and/or projects that will seek qualified services in order to carry out a successful project.

B. Stakeholder Involvement (0 to 10 Points)

Applicants will be awarded points for the extent to which they demonstrate inclusion of stakeholder communities and targeted beneficiaries in the design and operation of the project. Points will be given to projects that describe established or proposed partnerships and collaborations with relevant organizations and businesses. More points will be given to projects that describe the leadership, ownership, and/or involvement of the project's target community and market.

C. Food Access Goals (0 to 15 Points)

Projects will be awarded points based on how strongly they align with goal of the HFFI program, which is to improve access to affordable, nutritious food including Perishable and Staple foods for sale at Retail Outlets in Underserved Areas.

D. Project and/or Business Model (0 to 15 Points)

Projects will be evaluated for the strength of their proposed concept to improve food access through food retail and Food Enterprises. More points will be awarded for a clearly defined problem and proposed solutions, with projections supported by market analysis and/or community assessment and industry metrics or historical financials. Additionally, projects will be awarded more points if the supplier or buyer relationships have been determined.

E. Data capacity (0 to 5 points)

Applications will be evaluated for the applicant's demonstrated commitment to data collection, impact assessment, and sharing learnings with Reinvestment Fund and the HFFI program. More points will be awarded to applicants that demonstrate commitment to measure project outcomes and work with Reinvestment Fund to report applicable metrics.

F. Budget and Timeline (0 to 10 points)

Applications, budgets, and budget narratives will be reviewed for completeness and detail and the strength of the proposed timeline and additional, non-TSG Program funding commitments. Up to 5 points will be awarded for timeline. More points will be given to timelines that describe activities in detail and include a reasonable and differentiated timetable for proposed tasks. Up to 5 points will be awarded for the budget and the budget narrative. More points will be awarded for applications that describe all categories of costs, including estimates or quotes, and categorize items within line items.

Priority Points

Priority will be given to projects that have the following attributes. Two (2) points will be awarded for each attribute for a total of 16 priority points awarded on top of points awarded for the criteria above.

- Projects that are in Very Low-Income Communities (as defined earlier in this RFA).
- Projects that will create or retain Quality Jobs (as defined earlier in this RFA) for low-income residents in the community.
- Projects that support regional food systems and locally grown foods to the maximum extent possible.
- Projects that are accessible by public transit (in areas that are served by public transit).
- Projects that involve women- or minority-owned businesses.
- Projects in Rural Areas (as defined earlier in this RFA).
- Applicants who are applying for financial assistance as part of a larger project and have secured funding from other sources, including other federal agencies. Matching contributions or cost-sharing is not required for awarded funds. However, the ability of an applicant to demonstrate that a grant award will serve to leverage other sources of capital, including other local, state, or federal government resources, private sources of equity or debt, will be considered.
- Projects in communities that have been underserved by HFFI investment, including other national, state, and/or local HFFI programs.

In accordance with the program's Conflict of Interest and Confidentiality Policy, Reinvestment Fund has a process in place to prevent any actual or perceived conflicts of interest that may impact review or evaluation and will keep applicant information confidential.

PART VI—GRANT AWARD ADMINISTRATION

Successful applicants will be notified through an award document (Letter of Conditions) that sets forth the amount of funds granted, the terms and conditions of the grant, the grant effective date, and other pertinent instructions and information regarding funding. Grant projects will be expected to begin within 90 days of the grant effective date. Grantees will be asked to submit additional documentation, forms required for federal grants, and other information as applicable during the funding process as a condition of receiving the award. This documentation includes:

- A final, approved budget and project workplan
- The name of the authorized signatory for the Grantee
- Form AD-3031: Assurance regarding Felony Conviction and Tax Delinquency Status for Corporate Applicants
- Form AD-1048: Certification Regarding Debarment, Suspension, Ineligibility and Voluntary Exclusion - Lower Tier Covered Transactions
- Form AD-1049: Certification Regarding Drug-Free Workplace Requirements (Grants) Alternative I – For Grantees Other Than Individuals
- Certification regarding Lobbying Activities and SF LLL, "Disclosure of Lobbying Activities," if applicable.
- Certificate describing the Grantee's current insurance
- W-9: Request for Taxpayer Identification Number and Certification
- Bank Account information for ACH payments
- Projected project impact metrics, which will be collected through a survey platform

Grant awards will be funded with federal funds and, as such, grant award recipients are responsible for ensuring that their activities comply with all applicable federal regulations provided in 2 CFR part 200. Grant terms and conditions, grantee requirements, and applicable regulations will be described in a Grant Agreement to be signed between Reinvestment Fund and the Grantee. Grantee reporting requirements may include, but are not limited to:

- Requests for reimbursement or advance of grant funds along with appropriate backup documentation at regular intervals throughout the grant period
- Semi-annual reporting of grant project progress and use of grant funds throughout the grant period
- Final progress report, financial closeout report at the end of the grant period
- Ongoing reporting after the grant period closeout including status of equipment purchased with grant funds, status of SNAP retailer permit, and brief general project updates.

Delegation of Fiscal Responsibility

Unless the terms and conditions of the award state otherwise, grantees may not in whole or in part delegate or transfer to another person, institution, or organization the responsibility for use or expenditure of award funds.

Changes in Budget or Project Plans

All funds granted under this RFA may be used only for the purpose for which they are granted in accordance with the approved project scope and budget, regulations, terms and conditions of the award, and applicable federal regulations. In accordance with 2 CFR part 200.308, awardees must request prior approval from Reinvestment Fund for the following program or budget-related reasons:

- Change in the scope or the objective of the project or program (even if there is no associated budget revision requiring prior written approval).
- Change in a key person specified in the application or award.

- The disengagement from the project for more than three months, or a 25 percent reduction in time devoted to the project, by the approved project director or principal investigator.

Federal Financial Management Requirements

Grantees are expected to comply with applicable federal financial management requirements included in the award's terms and conditions and 2 CFR part 200. Failure to comply could result in Reinvestment Fund suspending grantee's access to funds.

Recruitment Activities

HFFI grantees may promote or advertise grant projects using any media, including television, radio, and billboards. Regardless of format, however, promotional activities funded with HFFI funds:

- must present factual statements intended to inform, not to persuade,
- may include locational information about retail outlets (i.e., the address of the retail food store participating in the grantee's project), may also specify that retailer outlet accepts SNAP (this includes appropriate logo use as outlined at <http://www.fns.usda.gov/sites/default/files/snap/SNAP-Logo-Guidance.pdf>).

Under no circumstances should HFFI grantees engage in any activities intended to persuade or recruit individuals to apply for SNAP benefits. The use of HFFI funds to employ personnel tasked with enrolling individuals in SNAP is strictly prohibited. Allowable promotional activities must be limited to factual statements and HFFI grantees should generally avoid emotional appeals in their promotional activities.

Expected Program Reporting Requirements

Grantees will be required to submit performance progress and financial reports semi-annually during the project period and, as applicable, after grant closeout. The reporting requirements will be included in the award terms and conditions within the Grant Agreement. If there are any program or award-specific terms, those will be identified in the Grant Agreement.

Noncompliance with Program Policy

Grantees are expected to comply with all policies and requirements laid out in this RFA document as well as any policies or requirements further clarified in Q&As, memoranda, HFFI Grant Agreements, and all applicable Federal Laws. If any grantee fails to comply with HFFI policies or requirements, Reinvestment Fund will notify that grantee of the issue and establish a timeline for corrective action. If the grantee fails to take required corrective action within the established timeline, then Reinvestment Fund will immediately suspend that grantee's access to grant funds and may terminate the grant agreement as a result of noncompliance.