



REINVESTMENT FUND

HEALTHY FOOD FINANCING INITIATIVE Request for Qualifications for Community Connectors

PROGRAM SUMMARY

The purpose of America's Healthy Food Financing Initiative (HFFI) is to support food supply chain resiliency, improve access to healthy foods in underserved areas, create and preserve quality jobs, and revitalize low-income communities. HFFI provides financial and technical assistance, either directly or through other partners and intermediaries, to fresh, healthy food retailers and food supply chain enterprises to overcome the higher costs and initial barriers to entry in underserved areas.

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. HFFI aims to build a more equitable food system that supports the health and economic vibrancy of all Americans.

To date, the HFFI program has provided \$25.4 million in grant awards to 162 projects through the Targeted Small Grants program. Prior grantees have been located in 48 states, in addition to Washington DC and Puerto Rico; have created or retained over 1,800 jobs; and created or retained over 625,000 square feet of food retail space.

Authorized by the 2014 Farm Bill, America's Healthy Food Financing Initiative (HFFI) is administered by Reinvestment Fund on behalf of USDA Rural Development.

To further the goals of the HFFI program, Reinvestment Fund will work with selected service providers to identify promising food retail and food retail supply chain projects located in low-income areas currently underserved by HFFI. Partners will help to conduct program outreach and engagement activities and facilitate alignment of projects with appropriate funding sources. They may also assist with provision of resources to healthy food retail and food retail supply chain projects.

To learn more about the Healthy Food Financing Initiative at Reinvestment Fund, visit www.investinginfood.com.

ABOUT REINVESTMENT FUND

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. At Reinvestment

Fund, we recognize the opportunity and responsibility that we have to make an impact in our community. Our values reflect what guides us as an organization. They also reflect the experiences of our past and the focus of our future. These are the strengths that we continue to invest in, reinforce, and enhance.

Reinvestment Fund aims to catalyze growth in historically underserved communities by using our tools and resources to advance equity and reduce racial disparities that stem from historic and systemic racism. We drive our work by increasing equity of access to resources that strengthen communities and create economic opportunity. We bring financial and analytical tools to partnerships that work to ensure that everyone has access to essential opportunities: affordable places to live, access to nutritious food and health care, schools where their children can flourish, and strong, local businesses that support jobs. We use data to understand markets, communities, and impediments to opportunity—and how investment and policy decisions can have the most powerful impact.

SERVICES NEEDED

Reinvestment Fund is seeking expert professional service providers to serve as HFFI outreach and intake partners (“HFFI Community Connectors”) to identify promising food retail and food retail supply chain projects located in low-income areas currently underserved by HFFI. HFFI Community Connectors will not only conduct deep outreach and engagement activities and facilitate HFFI program outreach, applicant intake, and eligibility determinations, but also provide industry-specific supportive services including (but not limited to) resource development and direct support and contractual services for eligible projects in underserved areas.

HFFI Community Connectors may be either individuals or organizations.

Services may include (but are not limited to):

- Conducting community-based outreach activities to eligible projects. In particular, outreach activities that focus on areas and demographics currently underserved by traditional financing and/or HFFI, such as Native communities, BIPOC or women-owned food retail and food supply chain enterprises, and projects in the Delta, Colonias, Appalachia, and other rural areas.
- Conducting initial conversations, intake, and eligibility screening of potential projects, and stewarding projects to appropriate financial and supportive services.
- Collaborative project pipeline development and regular coordination with the HFFI team and other partners to support potential projects.
- Resource development for broader field-building and education among HFFI constituencies including trainings, convenings, webinars, materials and toolkits, market research, and promoting peer learning and best practices in grocery retail and resilient food systems.

Reinvestment Fund seeks professionals and firms with general project management, outreach, and business planning expertise, as well as specialized expertise in the above areas as it pertains to food retail, food supply chain, healthy food access, and food systems.

PRIORITY CONSIDERATIONS

The program seeks to improve access to healthy foods in underserved areas, create and preserve quality jobs, and to revitalize low-income communities by providing advisory business support and capital to eligible healthy food projects in hard to reach, underserved areas.

This Request for Qualifications (RFQ) will prioritize providers who can demonstrate expertise and experience in providing services to priority populations and underserved areas. These populations and underserved areas include:

- Communities experiencing (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 due to historical, systemic, and economic factors
- Rural areas
- Communities in the Delta, Colonias, Appalachia, or Native lands
- Women led or owned businesses and entrepreneurs
- BIPOC led or owned businesses and entrepreneurs

BUDGET AND SCHEDULE

At least \$1,500,000 is available for selected service providers to conduct the aforementioned services. 3-5 providers will be selected to serve as Community Connectors based on the quality and fit of the qualifications received.

The expected duration of each provider contract is up to 12 months with the possibility for extension and/or variation based on the needs of the HFFI program and HFFI projects. The schedule is subject to change with prior notice given to providers.

Service providers will participate in regular meetings and provide updates around pipeline development and applicant-driven and industry-specific needs.

DISCLAIMERS

Responding to this solicitation is not a guarantee of a contract. This RFQ is merely an invitation for submission of proposals and does not legally obligate Reinvestment Fund to accept any of the submitted proposals in whole or in part. Reinvestment Fund reserves the right to negotiate with any or all firms with respect to price, cost, and/or scope of services. Only the execution of a written contract shall obligate Reinvestment Fund in accordance with the terms and conditions contained in such contract. Names of submitting organizations and individuals, as well as application content and any attachments, are kept confidential, except to those Reinvestment Fund staff involved in the review process.

ELIGIBILITY

Individuals and organizations are invited to apply for this opportunity. Organizations responding will need to identify specific individuals in their organization that will conduct the work and include details of their qualifications. Subcontracts are not permitted.

RESPONDENT INFORMATION

Please provide an overview of yourself or your organization, including:

Name:
Employer Identification Number:
Address:
Email:
Website:
Staffing plan (if organization, include names of all consulting staff; consultants listed must be employed by the organization applying):
Hourly consulting rate and/or estimated costs for scopes of services (including any expected travel) detailed in the demonstration of qualifications:
Geographies and/or communities in which you work:

DEMONSTRATION OF QUALIFICATIONS

Please provide a response to the following prompts. Organizational respondents should include information for each individual/key staff involved (as listed on the Staffing plan), as well as the organization's response.

1. Describe your experience conducting applicant intake and your capacity to manage the intake of prospective applications. Intake activities may include answering general questions about HFFI's available programs and services, assessing initial program eligibility, assessing financial and business support needs, and providing regular communication to Reinvestment Fund staff regarding the applicant pipeline.
2. Describe your experience conducting authentic community outreach and engagement and delivering services to the following priority populations and areas: businesses owned and/or operated by women or BIPOC entrepreneurs; low-to moderate income, rural, and Native or tribal communities; the Colonias, the Delta, and/or Appalachia. Include a description of the communities you engaged with, the types of services performed, and the outcomes that resulted from these efforts.

3. If applicable, describe your experience in delivering services to grocery stores, other food retail projects including alternative and non-traditional retail models, nutrition programs, food systems and/or the food supply chain. Include the scope, duration and outcomes of past projects, as well as examples of data sources, analytical tools, resources, and methodologies you typically use or have created in your work.
4. If applicable, please provide a sample of a deliverable (internal or external) you have provided for a previous outreach or engagement project that demonstrates your work in this area of expertise. This document will be kept confidential, except to those Reinvestment Fund staff involved in the review process. You may de-identify your client or other identifying information in the sample document.
5. List three references that can speak to your expertise and competence with outreach and intake and your ability to be a successful HFFI Community Connector.
6. Please include a copy of current resume, bio, or curriculum vitae for all staff listed on the staffing plan.

Please send responses to this RFQ and all questions to help@investinginfood.com with the subject line: HFFI Community Connector RFQ. Responses must be received by Friday, May 31st, 2024 at 11:59 pm Eastern Time.