

America's Healthy Food Financing Initiative Food Access and Retail Expansion (FARE) Fund

2024-2025 Request for Applications (RFA)



AMENDMENT SUMMARY

The list below highlights key clarifications and/or program developments to the Request for Applications for the 2024-2025 HFFI FARE Fund RFA.

Amendment	Type (Clarification/Program Development)	Location in RFA
Round 3 implementation grant funding inquiry deadline extended to August 18, 2025. Implementation grant deadline extended to October 10, 2025.	Program Development	Pg. 3, 22
Funding Inquiries for Technical Assistance will be accepted until September 1, 2025.	Program Development	Pg. 3, 46
Applicants who do not provide adequate location information in the Funding Inquiry may be declined eligibility	Clarification	Pg. 11
Projects involving direct-to-consumer retail sales must be physically located in and sell food in eligible Underserved Areas Food supply chain businesses do not need to be physically located in Underserved Areas, but must ultimately distribute to downstream SNAP authorized Food Retailers in eligible Underserved Areas	Clarification	Pg. 11
Included expanded description of Staple Foods	Clarification	Pg. 12
Added language to clarify that institutional sales are not an eligible project type as the primary use of funds under HFFI	Clarification	Pg. 13
Applicants may only submit one Funding Inquiry per RFA (previous once in a 12-month period) Additional Funding Inquiry submissions will be withdrawn	Program Development	Pg. 15
Sources and Uses documentation should outline status of funding as confirmed, prospective, or applied	Program Development	Pg. 16
HFFI FARE Fund loans should have at least 10% equity as part of their project budget	Program Development	Pg. 16, 34
Organizational name and legal entity documentation must match	Clarification	Pg. 17
Clarifies that implementation grants exclude early-stage predevelopment activities such as feasibility tasks, and provides additional language that describes the stages of development, including that implementation projects should demonstrate having site control, completed feasibility tasks, and a timeline for opening within the performance period	Clarification	Pg. 19-20, 21-22

Additional language citing the Notice of Federal Interest as it applies to real property, equipment, and supplies	Clarification	Pg. 21-22, 25, 30, 43
Declined grant applications will have their score considered for the remaining rounds of funding. Applicants will not be able to update the application prior to each round. Applications will not be rescored.	Program Development	Pg. 22
If applicants update location information at the full application stage, program will check new location information for eligibility which could change the eligibility determination	Clarification	Pg. 23, 47
Provide clarity that vehicles are not an eligible use of funds under the implementation grant	Clarification	Pg. 25
Update to priority point totals for Rural areas and Loan consideration. Rural increased from 2 to 4 points, and loan consideration increased from 2 to 3 points. Priority points now total 25.	Program Development	Pg. 28-29
Reinvestment Fund's review of environmental documentation by third party experts may require a 4-6 week turnaround.	Program Development	Pg. 31, 43
With issuance of a term sheet, loan applicants may be required to provide a deposit to cover legal and third-party diligence costs.	Program Development	Pg. 34-35 Loan Product Chart
A loan where the term sheet is accepted by the Applicant, will be advanced for full underwriting and credit approval, and will be valid for 90 days	Program Development	Pg. 35
Loans may be prepaid any time, with notice of prepayment of no less than 30 days.	Program Development	Pg. 35
Language added regarding Refinance to Loan review section	Program Development	Pg. 40
Added language regarding SNAP promotion to loan section	Clarification	Pg. 43-44
Added award announcement dates for Technical Assistance selections: no earlier than July 2025 and November 2025	Program Development	Pg. 46

Reinvestment Fund
America's Healthy Food Financing Initiative
Food Access and Retail Expansion (FARE) Fund
2024-2025 Request for Applications (RFA)

FUNDING OPPORTUNITY TITLE

America's Healthy Food Financing Initiative Food Access and Retail Expansion Fund (HFFI FARE Fund)

ANNOUNCEMENT TYPE

Amendment

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 Food Access and Retail Expansion Fund (HFFI FARE Fund) for the 2024-2025 funding cycle.

Over the next five years, the HFFI FARE Fund will provide \$60 million in loans, grants and technical assistance to food retail and food retail supply chain projects. For the 2024-2025 funding cycle, at least \$9,000,000 is available for implementation grants, at least \$1,500,000 is available for technical assistance, and at least \$16,000,000 is available for loans. The purpose of 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 by providing financial and technical assistance, either directly or through other partners and intermediaries, to eligible fresh, healthy food retailers and enterprises to overcome the higher costs and initial barriers to entry in underserved areas. Eligible applicants for grants and technical assistance include for-profit, nonprofit, and cooperatively owned businesses, institutions of higher education, state and local governments and tribal governments. Eligible applicants for loans include for-profit, nonprofit, and cooperatively owned businesses, and institutions of higher education. Applicants may include food retailers or non-retail food enterprises. Grants and loans will be available to eligible organizations implementing projects in eligible underserved areas that are designed to improve access to fresh, healthy food through food retail.

This notice identifies the objectives for the HFFI FARE Fund, deadline dates, funding information, eligibility criteria for projects and applicants, and application requirements and associated instructions needed to apply for an HFFI FARE Fund grant, loan, or technical assistance.

DATES

Funding Inquiries must be submitted through Reinvestment Fund's online grants portal, SmartSimple (<https://reinvestmentfund.smartsimple.com/>) by the dates in the chart below. Please be mindful of the deadline dates for implementation grants. Loans and technical assistance funding inquiries and applications will be accepted and reviewed on a rolling basis.

Eligible Funding Inquiries will be invited to submit a full application. Applications will be due 45 days after invitations are sent. Applications must be submitted through Reinvestment Fund's online grants portal, SmartSimple (<https://reinvestmentfund.smartsimple.com/>).

	Implementation Grants	Loans	Technical Assistance
Funding Inquiry Form	Round 1: October 14, 2024 Round 2: March 3, 2025 Round 3: August 18, 2025	Rolling deadline	Rolling deadline until September 1, 2025
Application	Round 1: January 6, 2025 Round 2: May 26, 2025 Round 3: October 10, 2025	If invited, due 45 days after invitation is sent	If invited, due 45 days after invitation is sent

HFFI PROGRAM CONTACT:

Anne Misak, Program Director, Equitable Food Systems

Website: www.investinginfood.com

Email: help@investinginfood.com

Please include your specific question(s) in the body of your message.

Phone: 215-574-5862

Address

Reinvestment Fund
Attn: Healthy Food Financing Initiative
1700 Market Street, 19th Floor
Philadelphia, PA 19103

WEBINARS

Informational webinars will be held for potential applicants for each funding opportunity. No registration is required. To join the webinar, please follow the links in the webinar schedule below.

- **HFFI FARE Fund Overview:** 2:00 PM Eastern Time on Tuesday, September 10, 2024
 - <https://bit.ly/hffi-fare-fund>
- **Grant and TA Overview:** 1:00 PM Eastern Time on Wednesday, September 18, 2024
 - <https://bit.ly/hffi-farefund-grants>
- **Loan Overview:** 3:00 PM Eastern Time on Wednesday, September 25, 2024
 - <https://bit.ly/hffi-farefund-loans>

Reinvestment Fund will record and post the webinars, as well as answers to questions asked during the webinars, at <https://www.investinginfood.com/fare-fund>.

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

REINVESTMENT FUND
America’s Healthy Food Financing Initiative
Food Access and Retail Expansion (FARE) Fund
2024 - 2025 Request for Applications (RFA)

Table of Contents

PART I—FUNDING OPPORTUNITY DESCRIPTION	6
Legislative Authority and Background	6
Program Description	7
Definitions	7
PART II—ELIGIBILITY INFORMATION.....	10
Eligibility	10
Priority Areas	12
Project Considerations	13
What We Will Not Fund	13
PART III—APPLICATION PROCESS	15
Phase 1: Funding Inquiry Form	15
Phase 2: Application.....	16
Other Application Guidelines and Funding Restrictions	16
PART IV— SUBMITTING A FUNDING INQUIRY	17
Applicant Requirements	17
Funding Inquiry (FI) Narrative.....	18
PART V – GRANT INFORMATION.....	21
Available Funding.....	21
What We Will Fund.....	21
Application Timelines.....	22
PART VI – SUBMITTING A GRANT APPLICATION	23
Grant Application Requirements	23
PART VII – GRANT APPLICATION REVIEW.....	27
PART VIII – GRANT AWARD ADMINISTRATION	29
PART IX – LOAN INFORMATION	32
Available Funding.....	32
What We Will Fund.....	32

Indicative Loan Terms by Product Type	34
Application Timelines.....	35
PART X – SUBMITTING A LOAN APPLICATION.....	35
Loan Application Requirements.....	35
PART XI— LOAN APPLICATION REVIEW	39
PART XII— LOAN ADMINISTRATION	41
PART XIII — TECHNICAL ASSISTANCE INFORMATION	45
Available Funding.....	45
What We Will Fund.....	45
Application Timelines.....	46
PART XIV — SUBMITTING A TECHNICAL ASSISTANCE APPLICATION.....	46
Technical Assistance Requirements.....	46
PART XV – TECHNICAL ASSISTANCE REVIEW AND AWARD ADMINISTRATION.....	50

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. **Funding for this announcement is made available largely through the American Rescue Plan Act of 2021 (Pub. L. 117-2, Sec. 1001).**

The purpose of 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 by providing financial and technical assistance, either directly or through other partners and intermediaries, 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. Events over the last four years have revealed how essential grocery stores, food suppliers, and their employees are to communities. The economic impact of the pandemic and inflation has constrained 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. As the NFM, Reinvestment Fund has awarded [over \\$25 million](#) directly to food retail and food enterprise projects in 48 states, Washington D.C., and Puerto Rico, via three rounds of the HFFI Targeted Small Grants (HFFI TSG) Program. Additionally, [over \\$40 million has been awarded](#) to support new and existing regional, state, and local food financing programs through the HFFI Local and Regional Healthy Food Financing Partnerships Program, and \$5.8 million more has been awarded through the [HFFI Planning Grant Program](#). Reinvestment Fund also co-convenes the Food Lenders Network.

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 \$3.2 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 \$371 million in grants and loans to healthy food projects.

Program Description

This Request for Applications (RFA) is for the 2024-2025 HFFI Food Access and Retail Expansion Fund (HFFI FARE Fund). Over the next 5 years, the new program will offer \$60 million in loans, grants, and technical assistance for the predevelopment, planning, and implementation of eligible projects aiming to increase food access, and strengthen, expand, and innovate within the food retail supply chain. For the 2024-2025 funding cycle, at least \$9,000,000 is available for implementation grants, at least \$1,500,000 is available for technical assistance, and at least \$16,000,000 is available for loans.

The FARE Fund supports innovative fresh food retail and food system enterprises that seek to improve access to healthy food in underserved areas through food retail. Funding could assist projects with a variety of aspects of project development, renovation, and/or expansion. Grants and loans are designed to be one-time investments of capital into shovel-ready food retail or food enterprise projects in order to address higher costs and initial barriers to entry in underserved rural and urban areas. Grant and loan funds should unlock additional sources of capital, catalyze project sustainability, meet financing gaps, and/or enable deeper impact or project reach. Technical Assistance (TA) will be available to support selected early-stage planning and predevelopment projects where resources would help build local capacity to develop a food retail outlet or food enterprise and would clarify or advance an eligible project.

Definitions

AWARD: The Federal financial assistance that a non-Federal entity receives directly from a Federal awarding agency or indirectly from a pass-through entity.

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.

FOOD RETAIL: Food retail refers to a Retail Outlet that accepts benefits under the Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program (SNAP) established under the Food and Nutrition Act of 2008 (7 USC 2011 et seq.).

FOOD SUPPLY CHAIN RESILIENCE: Food supply chain diversification such that it provides consumers with access to fresh, healthy foods and provides retailers, food enterprises, and/or producers with more, better, and new market opportunities in favorable market conditions and in order to withstand and recover from disruptions and times of crisis or disaster.

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/>).

LOCAL AND REGIONAL FOOD SYSTEMS: Food products that are raised, produced, aggregated, stored, processed, and distributed in the locality or region through systems of interconnected entities, channels,

communities, and/or individuals.

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 7 USC 6953(b)(4), the term “Perishable Food” means a staple food that is fresh, refrigerated, or frozen.

QUALITY JOB: As defined in 7 USC 6953(b)(4), 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 77 USC 6953(b)(4),) 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 Tract 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—ELIGIBILITY INFORMATION

Eligibility

The FARE Fund will provide grants, loans, and technical assistance 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 FARE Fund 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 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 TA 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 to better reach rural communities not served by a grocery store. 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 in Underserved Areas. We seek applications from these types of projects and many others not described here. Eligible uses of funds will vary across grants, loans, and technical assistance. Applicants are encouraged to carefully read the eligible uses of funds under the sections for each type of assistance.

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*

***State, local, and tribal governments are eligible for grants and technical assistance but not for loans currently.**

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 involving retail sales in an eligible Underserved Area in order to be eligible for the program. Applicants will be required to provide location information such as an address(es) for the proposed project site(s). Applicants that do not provide adequate location information may be declined for eligibility for the HFFI FARE Fund.

Projects in underserved Urban and Rural Areas, that also meet the other program requirements, are eligible. 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. 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 be a Census tract adjacent to 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; and which has a median family income less than or equal to 120 percent of the applicable Area Median Family Income;
3. OR be a Geographic Unit as defined in 12CFR Part 1805.201(b)(3)(ii)(B), which meets the criteria as having low access to supermarkets or grocery stores through a methodology that has been adopted for use by another government or philanthropic healthy food initiative or demonstrates other criteria describing low access to supermarkets or grocery stores for an underserved community.

Projects involving direct-to-consumer retail sales must be physically located and sell food in eligible Underserved Areas. Projects involving supply chain businesses do not need to be physically located in Underserved Areas, but must ultimately distribute to downstream SNAP authorized Food Retailers in eligible Underserved Areas.

More information, including data and maps 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.

Eligible Projects

In addition to meeting the location requirement, to be eligible for consideration for funding from the FARE Fund, applicants must also 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);
2. If the project involves direct-to-consumer 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.); and
3. Plans to maintain and improve Food Supply Chain Resilience.

Examples of previous grantees and eligible projects, are available at <https://www.investinginfood.com/impact/>

Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program (SNAP)

General questions about SNAP and EBT should be directed to Ask USDA 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-to-accept>. 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, meat, and dairy products. Staple foods are generally considered to be basic items of food that make up a significant portion of an individual's diet and are usually prepared at home and consumed as a major component of a meal. Staple foods do not include prepared or heated foods or accessory food products which are generally considered to be food items consumed as snacks or desserts, as well as food items that complement or supplement meals, such as most beverages and spices. Perishable Foods mean Staple Foods that are fresh, refrigerated, or frozen. More information about Staple and Perishable Foods is available at <https://www.fns.usda.gov/snap/retailer/staple-foods>.

Based on the eligible Staple Foods categories named above, applicants should demonstrate that their proposed project will expand or preserve the availability of an assortment of these Staple and Perishable Foods in Underserved Areas, either through the direct retail sale 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 at SNAP authorized Retail Outlets. Projects with direct-to-consumer retail sales must offer a substantial assortment of Staple and Perishable foods for retail sale. Food Enterprise projects should speak to the product mix and estimated quantities of Staple and Perishable Foods from their project—and downstream at SNAP authorized Retail Outlets—that would be made newly available or for which availability would be preserved for communities in Underserved Areas.

Priority Areas

Priority will be given to projects planning business models that:

- Will be located in Very Low-Income Communities (as defined earlier in this RFA)
- Will create or retain Quality Jobs (as defined earlier in this RFA) for low-income residents in the community
- Will support regional food systems and locally grown foods to the maximum extent possible
- Will be accessible by public transit (in areas that are served by public transit)
- Will involve women-owned or controlled businesses
- Will involve Black, Indigenous, and People of Color (BIPOC)-owned or controlled businesses
- Will be located in Rural Areas (as defined earlier in this RFA)
- Will be located in communities that have been underserved by HFFI investment, including other national, state, and/or local HFFI programs
- If applying for a grant, are also applying for a loan and need the grant to make the project viable

Project Considerations

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 and/or the loan has been repaid.
- **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 requested funds would enable the applicant to access additional sources of capital to fund their project, including debt financing 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 not for sale are not eligible. Projects that include growing or production as well as downstream food supply chain activities including distribution and sale can be eligible, as long as funds are primarily to support retail supply chain activities.
- **Institutional Sales:** This program will not support projects that are primarily focused on the distribution and sale of staple and perishables foods to institutional entities such as restaurants, schools, charitable organizations, or hospitals. Institutional distribution and sales may be a component of an eligible food enterprise project that can demonstrate how the proposed project will expand or preserve the availability of Staple and Perishable foods at SNAP authorized food retailers in Underserved Areas.
- **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, through which food is being sold, 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 and sale of healthy food through retail.
- **Prepared Foods:** This program will not directly support projects that are primarily focused on the sale of prepared hot, or cold, or frozen foods and meals, including those provided 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. Operating capital may be available as part of a larger loan package (See Part IX: Loan Information for further details).
- **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. FARE Fund 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.

Awards will be made on the merits 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.

PART III—APPLICATION PROCESS

The HFFI Food Access and Retail Expansion (FARE) Fund will have a two-phased application process for each funding opportunity.

We will host several informational webinars to provide potential applicants with an overview of the RFA, the grant, TA, and loan application processes, information on how to navigate the online submission process, and to answer questions about the program.

No registration is required. To join each webinar, please use the following links in the webinar schedule below.

- **HFFI FARE Fund Overview:** 2:00 PM Eastern Time on Tuesday, September 10, 2024
 - <https://bit.ly/hffi-fare-fund>
- **Grant and TA Overview:** 1:00 PM Eastern Time on Wednesday, September 18, 2024
 - <https://bit.ly/hffi-farefund-grants>
- **Loan Overview:** 3:00 PM Eastern Time on Wednesday, September 25, 2024
 - <https://bit.ly/hffi-farefund-loans>

Reinvestment Fund will post a recording of the webinars, as well as answers to questions asked during the webinars, at www.investinginfood.com. If there are questions about the Funding Inquiry form before or after the webinar, please contact us. Contact information is on Page 3 of this RFA.

Phase 1: Funding Inquiry Form

Submission of a Funding Inquiry form is the first step in the application process and is required for all applicants to express interest in grant and loan funding or technical assistance from the HFFI FARE Fund. The HFFI (FARE) Fund will only accept one Funding Inquiry per RFA. Additional Funding Inquiry submissions after the initial submission will not be reviewed by Program staff and will be withdrawn from the 2024 - 2025 funding cycle. Program staff will reach out to applicants if additional information is needed regarding their funding inquiry submission.

Funding Inquiries must be submitted through Reinvestment Fund's online grants portal, SmartSimple (<https://reinvestmentfund.smartsimple.com/>). Funding Inquiries will be reviewed to determine applicant eligibility for the FARE Fund. The Funding Inquiry phase includes applicant information, project location(s), a brief eligibility questionnaire, and a brief project summary that includes an overview of the applicant's proposed project, stage of development, organizational background, project timeline, and funding request. Reinvestment Fund and our partners will screen all funding inquiries for eligibility based on submission requirements, applicant eligibility, project location, and project types. Applicants that do not provide adequate information in their Funding Inquiry may be declined eligibility for the HFFI FARE Fund. Applicants will not be able to edit the Funding Inquiry once it is submitted.

Each type of assistance has a separate application. Eligible projects will be invited to submit a full application for the types of assistance requested (grant, loan, and/or TA) and should plan application submissions based on the stage (predevelopment or implementation) and need of the project.

Phase 2: Application

Each type of assistance has a separate application. Only eligible projects will be invited to submit a full application for the types of assistance requested in your Funding Inquiry. Applications must be submitted through Reinvestment Fund's online grants portal, SmartSimple (<https://reinvestmentfund.smartsimple.com/>).

Full applications build upon the Funding Inquiry and will require additional project information, project narrative questions, operating projections, budget details, and budget narrative. Application submissions must adhere to the deadline guidance stated in Part V, Part IX, and Part XIII of this RFA.

Applicants applying for multiple types of assistance may submit applications throughout the funding cycle to apply for the appropriate assistance (grant, loan, and/or TA) based on the stage (predevelopment or implementation) and need of the project. Please plan full application submissions appropriately. For example, if the applicant is applying for technical assistance and needs to complete essential site analysis activities such as a feasibility study on a proposed site, the applicant would wait to submit an implementation grant application until after the feasibility study results are complete, as implementation grant applications should include a site address and established site control.

Other Application Guidelines and Funding Restrictions

Multiple Submissions

The HFFI Food Access and Retail Expansion (FARE) Fund will only accept one Funding Inquiry per entity per RFA. If there are multiple entities involved in a project, they can each submit a Funding Inquiry and must disclose the partner entity and the type of assistance they are requesting. However, each project will only be able to apply for each type of assistance (loan, grant, TA) once per RFA, regardless of how many entities are involved. For example, if Entity A and Entity B are working on Project Grocery, each can submit a Funding Inquiry on behalf of the project, but they need to decide which entity will apply for which type of funding. Therefore, Entity A could apply for a loan and Entity B could apply for TA and a grant, but they cannot both apply for a grant for Project Grocery under the current RFA.

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. Please contact help@investinginfood.com should the applicant need to change their primary point of contact.

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.

In some cases, a loan applicant might have yet to be awarded sources of funding that they consider integral to their budget. These funds could be grants or equity. The applicant may include these sources as part of their budget, but should indicate applicable status such as confirmed, prospective, applied, etc., and should explain how the project will move forward if these prospective or unconfirmed sources of funds are not awarded. Applicants for HFFI FARE Fund loans should have at least 10% equity as part of their project budget.

Failure to comply with these above requirements for a submission to the HFFI FARE Fund may result in Reinvestment Fund determining that the applicant is not eligible to receive funding.

PART IV— SUBMITTING A FUNDING INQUIRY

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, SmartSimple (<https://reinvestmentfund.smartsimple.com/>).

Submissions in response to this RFA should follow the instructions in the sections below. 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 application deadlines.

Applicant Requirements

In order to submit a Funding Inquiry in response to this RFA, applicants will need to provide:

Organization Information (this information should match the documentation submitted as evidence of the applicant's legal status as an entity)

Organization Name
Legal Entity Name
Organization Address

Contact Information

Name
Email
Phone Number
Address

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 and must upload proof of status documentation with the Funding Inquiry. 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.

Unique Entity Identifier (UEI)

Applicants must have a Unique Entity Identifier (UEI). This number is obtained when you register with SAM (defined above). On April 4, 2022, the unique entity identifier used across the federal government changed from the DUNS Number to the Unique Entity ID (generated by SAM.gov).

- The Unique Entity ID is a 12-character alphanumeric ID assigned to an entity by SAM.gov.
- As part of this transition, the DUNS Number has been removed from SAM.gov.
- Entity registration, searching, and data entry in SAM.gov now require use of the new Unique Entity

ID.

- Existing registered entities can find their Unique Entity ID by following the steps [here](#).
- New entities can get their Unique Entity ID at SAM.gov and, if required, complete an entity registration.

Reinvestment Fund does not manage SAM and cannot answer questions about SAM registration and UEI. Please review the HELP page at: <https://sam.gov/content/help> and/or contact SAM directly.

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 a Funding Inquiry:

- 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>

Funding Inquiry (FI) Narrative

Applicants will be required to provide the following information as a Funding Inquiry (FI) submission. Applicants that do not provide adequate information for the following sections may be declined eligibility for the HFFI FARE Fund.

Eligibility

Applicants will answer a series of questions based on HFFI criteria that best describes their project. If the applicant's responses are determined to be likely ineligible, they will not be able to complete the Funding Inquiry and should refer to the Request for Applications for further guidance.

Applicants must answer whether their project:

- 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);
- If the project involves direct-to-consumer 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.); and
- Plans to maintain and improve Food Supply Chain Resilience.

If the project involves direct-to-consumer food retail, applicants must describe the assortment of Staple and Perishable food that will be sold. If the project involves a food retail supply chain enterprise that will not involve retail sales directly to consumers, applicants must describe how the project will ultimately support retail supply chains increasing the sale of an assortment of Staple and Perishable foods at SNAP authorized food retailers. Projects that only supply institutions such as schools, hospitals, and restaurants, are not eligible.

Project Information

Project Name:

Project Location Status:

Location Name:

Project Address (if your project will operate at multiple addresses or will supply one or more SNAP authorized retail outlets, please include their addresses in the table provided in SmartSimple):

Eligibility map of location (Data and maps to help determine if a proposed location is eligible is available at <https://www.investinginfood.com/eligibility/>.)

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:

Type of Project

Applicants must select the type of project that best describes their project.

- Grocery Retail
- Mobile Market
- Food Hub
- Farmers Market or Farm Stand
- Grocery Delivery
- Food Processing
- Wholesale Distribution
- Other

Applicants will also be asked to indicate if the business model for which they are requesting funding is a new business model or the expansion of an existing business model.

Project Stage

Applicants must select the stage of development for their project. Your Funding Inquiry request must be appropriate for the stage of development. Implementation grants are for shovel-ready projects that have a site identified and/or established site control, completed feasibility tasks, and a timeline for opening within the performance period. Technical assistance may be the most appropriate funding request if the project is in planning or early-stage predevelopment stage.

- Concept/Planning (project is an idea)
- Predevelopment (project is early-stage and may need to complete feasibility analysis tasks)
- Implementation (site control established (executed purchase agreement, lease agreement or ownership), construction timeline finalized, feasibility tasks are completed, and project is expected to open within an established timeline)

Project Description (500 words)

Briefly describe the project for which the applicants are seeking funding as they relate to the selected project type(s) above. Applicants must describe the business model, stage of development, uses of funds, and timeline.

Community Served and Need (250 words)

Applicants must briefly describe the community to be served and demonstrate why the project is needed to achieve increased healthy food access.

Organization Background (250 words)

Applicants must briefly describe the business or organization that is leading and operating this project. What type of experience does the applicant have with similar food retail or food retail supply chain projects?

Funding Request

Applicants may include the requested amount for each funding opportunity. Applicants will not be asked to identify exact dollar amounts for each use at this stage.

- Implementation grant requests may be from \$20,000-\$250,000
- Loan requests may be from \$500,000-\$5,000,000
- Technical Assistance funding requests may be up to \$100,000

Type of Assistance Needed

Applicants must select from the following categories the types of assistance they are seeking for their project.

- Loan (including predevelopment, acquisition, bridge, construction to permanent loans for new build, renovation, or expansion of a business, NMTC Source Loan, equipment and other capital needs, working capital and other soft costs)
 - Applicant should be prepared to upload a sources and uses spreadsheet, if applicable.
- Grant (including end-stage project predevelopment, building or land acquisition, construction for new build, renovation, or expansion of a business, materials, equipment, technology/software)
- Technical Assistance (early-stage predevelopment activities including business model development, project planning, market studies, business planning, financial modeling, appraisals, community engagement, technology development, community development and food systems/access, business and retail management, project management, leadership development/management training, financial management, governance and organizational structure, community engagement and outreach, and legal)

PART V – GRANT INFORMATION

Available Funding

At least \$9,000,000 is available for implementation grants for the 2024 - 2025 HFFI FARE Fund. These funds will be distributed through three rounds of funding. Implementation grant awards may be from \$20,000-\$250,000. We expect to award 12-20 grants each round, for a total of 36-60 implementation grant awards for 2024-2025.

All applicants interested in grant funding must submit a Funding Inquiry form in order to determine eligibility. If determined to be eligible, applicants will be invited to submit a full application for the appropriate funding opportunity.

Total funding may be increased, and more grants awarded, if additional funds become available. For more information on previous HFFI funding rounds and grant awards, please visit www.investinginfood.com/impact.

What We Will Fund

Implementation grant funding is for projects that are shovel-ready and have a clear timeline for opening when applying for HFFI FARE Fund grant funding. Projects should have site control via an executed lease agreement, purchase agreement or full property ownership, completed feasibility tasks, and a timeline for opening within the performance period. This means projects that are in the planning and early predevelopment stage are not yet eligible for implementation grant funding. Implementation grant funding cannot be used for early predevelopment activities such as site analysis, feasibility studies, market studies, community needs assessments or financial planning. If your project still needs to complete these activities, you should apply for technical assistance.

Grant funding 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 in a venue that accepts SNAP.

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

- **End-Stage Predevelopment:** Eligible predevelopment activities at the implementation stage are limited to end-stage activities. As part of implementing the project, grant funds may include end-stage predevelopment and soft costs, including appraisals, architectural or design assistance, training, or other end-stage contractual or consulting uses. Inclusion of early-stage predevelopment uses for implementation will be considered ineligible.
- **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. Please note that using Federal grant funds for real property (purchase or construction) will result in a Federal Interest in your property. See 2 CFR 200.310-316 for more information.
- **Equipment and 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 is not for a facility, including, machinery, equipment, technology, software, purchase of existing business assets, a one-time investment in inventory or raw materials, or other. Vehicle purchases are not an eligible

expense under implementation grants. Please note that using Federal grant funds for equipment with a lifespan more than one year and a per-unit cost of \$5,000 or more will result in a Federal Interest in your property. See 2 CFR 200.310-316 for more information.

- **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.

Application Timelines

Grant Funding Inquiry forms and full applications will be due no later than 11:59 pm Eastern Time on the following dates:

	Funding Inquiry Form Due	Application Due	Award Selections (no earlier than)
Round 1	October 14, 2024	January 6, 2025	March 2025
Round 2	March 3, 2025	May 26, 2025	August 2025
Round 3	August 18, 2025	October 10, 2025	December 2025

Funding Inquiry

Grant Funding Inquiry forms will be accepted on a rolling basis, but applicants must adhere to the submission deadlines for consideration in each round of funding. For instance, if you want to apply for Round 1, you will need to submit your Funding Inquiry (FI) form by October 14, 2024, in order to get an eligibility determination and the application link by early November and have enough time to submit a full grant application by January 6, 2025. Any FIs received after October 14, 2024, and before March 3, 2025, will then be considered for round 2. Similarly, any FIs received after March 3, 2025 will then be considered for round 3.

Funding Inquiries requesting implementation grants will not be considered after August 18, 2025 and must wait to apply during a future RFA cycle.

Applicants will be contacted once their Funding Inquiry has been reviewed and, if eligible, will receive an invitation to submit a full application. Review time for Funding Inquiries will vary based on the volume of submissions.

Full Application

Full applications will be reviewed and scored approximately every six months. 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 March 2025 for Round 1, August 2025 for Round 2, and December 2025 for round 3. 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.

Applications that are declined for grant funding will have their score considered for the remaining rounds of funding in this 2024 – 2025 HFFI FARE Fund RFA. Declined applications will not have the opportunity to update their applications prior to each subsequent round and applications will not be rescored. For example, if the applicant was declined in Round 1, their Round 1 score will be considered for Round 2. If the application is also declined for Round 2, their Round 1 score will be considered for the final Round 3.

Performance Period

Projects may take up to 12 months if they do not involve construction; projects that include construction (real property improvements) may take up to 24 months. **If selected for an award, the implementation project must start within 90 days of award notification.**

PART VI – SUBMITTING A GRANT APPLICATION

Grant 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 Funding Inquiry phase, as a full application for funding to the HFFI FARE Fund.

Project Locations

If site location information from their Funding Inquiry has changed, applicants will be asked to provide an update, which could include the status of site identification, updated project address, or a description of the neighborhood(s) the business will most likely be located in and/or serve. Applicants should check the eligibility of the new location on our eligibility map available here:

<https://www.investinginfood.com/eligibility/>. Program staff will review any additional project location information for eligibility which may affect the eligibility of the application.

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 and role 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, including data on access points and possible competition. 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 based on your Funding Inquiry. 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 FARE Fund.

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

Priorities

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

- How will the business model resulting from this project create or retain Quality Jobs (as defined earlier in this RFA) for low-income residents in the community? (100 words)
- How will the business model resulting from this project support regional food systems and locally grown foods to the maximum extent possible? (100 words)
- How will your program serve Rural areas? (100 words)
- Will the business model resulting from this project be accessible by public transit? (100 words)
- How will the project involve women-owned or controlled businesses? (100 words)
- How will the project involve Black, Indigenous, and People of Color (BIPOC)-owned or controlled businesses? (100 words)

Project Timeline (500 words)

Applicants should describe the amount of time needed to complete the project and an overview of their project's timeline, as well as a description of the overall project timing and relevant factors influencing project timing and success. Projects may take up to 12 months if they do not involve construction; projects that include construction may take up to 24 months. Applicants will be asked to upload a table identifying key project activities and milestones with relevant dates to be completed during the grant period.

II. Budget

Budget

Applicants will be asked to provide a complete budget breakdown and explanation for their HFFI FARE Fund grant request by cost category. Stronger applications will outline detailed budgets that include reasonable estimates for costs eligible for HFFI funding. Applicants who include ineligible costs or expenses that do not align with the HFFI eligible project described in the narrative questions will score lower. 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, include each staff person for the applicant who has a substantive role in the proposed project, their # of hours or % of FTE, salary, and the amount of the request. Personnel costs should be reasonable for the services rendered, specifically relating to the HFFI project, conform to the established written policy of your organization, and be consistently applied to both Federal and non-Federal activities.

Fringe

As applicable, provide the fringe benefit rates for each of the personnel listed above for which you are requesting grant funds. The costs of fringe benefits should be reasonable and in line with the established policies of your organization.

Travel

As applicable, provide trip details and purpose for all travel requested. Travel in this section is for staff of the applicant organization. Travel expenses must be in accordance with the applicant organization's established travel policies, which will be adhered to when completing the above-mentioned trips, in accordance with [2 CFR Part 200.475](#) or [48 CFR Part 31.2](#).

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, fixtures such as portable/unaffixed refrigeration, kitchen, and storage equipment, furniture, Point of Sale (POS) or computers, copy/fax machines, telephones, and software. Please note that using Federal grant funds for equipment with a lifespan more than one year and a per-unit cost of \$5,000 or more will result in a Federal Interest in your property. See 2 CFR 200.310-316 for more information.

Vehicle purchases are not an eligible expense under implementation grants.

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. Please note that using Federal grant funds for real property (purchase or construction) will result in a Federal Interest in your property. See 2 CFR 200.310-316 for more information.

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 (less than one year) items under \$5,000 per unit, such as paper, envelopes, pens and pencils, office supplies, marketing materials, etc. Please note that using Federal grant funds for materials and supplies will result in a Federal Interest in your property. See 2 CFR 200.310-316 for more information.

Other Costs:

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

Indirect Charges:

If you do not have a Federally approved negotiated indirect cost rate (NICRA), 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. However, you must comply with any approved negotiated indirect cost rate that you have received from the Federal government, so if you have a NICRA, you should use that rate to calculate your indirect costs. Regardless of which way you calculate indirect costs, you may not charge more than 10 percent of your total award amount as indirect costs.

Program Income:

As applicable, list program income that will be generated by the proposed activities. As described in 2 CFR Part 200, program income means gross income earned by the non-Federal entity that is directly generated by a supported activity or earned as a result of the Federal award during the Grant Period. Program income includes, but is not limited to, income from fees for services performed, the use or rental of real or personal property acquired under Federal awards, the sale of commodities or items fabricated under a Federal award, license fees and royalties on patents and copyrights, and principal and interest on loans made with Federal award funds. Interest earned on advances of Federal funds is not program income. Refer to 2 CFR Part 200.307 for more information on Program Income. To the extent possible, all program income identified in the grant agreement budget may be utilized according to the Additive Method (see 2 CFR Part 200.307(e)(2)).

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 details 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 the 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.

PART VII — GRANT APPLICATION REVIEW

Invited applications submitted by eligible applicants will be evaluated and scored based on the criteria below. Reinvestment Fund's HFFI Review Panel of internal and external experts 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 25 available additional points for the priority areas listed below. Each application will be scored by three reviewers, and the scores will be averaged.

The top 25% of applications will be further evaluated by the HFFI Review Panel who will determine a consensus ranking of applications that will take into account the application score, project type and geographic diversity (including urban and rural), program diversity, and ability to advance the HFFI goals. In the event of tied scores, HFFI program staff and the Review Panel have discretion in breaking ties.

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 awarded to applicants that demonstrate relevant industry experience, relevant partners in the project team, and the ability to obtain qualified services necessary 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 the goal of the HFFI program, which is to improve access to affordable and healthy Perishable and Staple foods for sale at SNAP authorized Retail Outlets in underserved areas. More points will be awarded to applications that show how the proposed project activities will lead to a sustainable business model that creates, expands, enables, or sustains access to a substantial assortment of Staple and Perishable foods for retail sale in an underserved community. If the

project is a food enterprise, more points will be awarded to applications that show how the implementation of this business model will sustainability contribute to the retail food supply chain and downstream SNAP authorized retailers, ultimately improving food access through retail sales.

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 (0 to 5 points)

Budgets and budget narratives will be reviewed for completeness and detail. 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 expenses within line items.

G. Timeline (0 to 5 points)

Up to 5 points will be awarded for timelines. More points will be given to timelines that describe activities in detail and include a reasonable and differentiated timetable for proposed tasks to be completed during the grant period, and emphasize shovel-ready projects. More points will also be given if key project milestones and activities, with relevant dates, are included.

Priority Points

Priority will be given to projects that have the following attributes. Points will be awarded for each attribute for a total of 25 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) (2 points).
- Projects that will create or retain Quality Jobs (as defined earlier in this RFA) for low-income residents in the community (2 points).
- Projects that support regional food systems and locally grown foods to the maximum extent possible (2 points).
- Projects that are accessible by public transit (in areas that are served by public transit) (2 points).
- Will involve women-owned or controlled businesses (2 points).
- Will involve Black, Indigenous, and People of Color (BIPOC)-owned or controlled businesses (2 points).
- Projects in Rural Areas (as defined earlier in this RFA) (4 points).
- 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 (2 points).
- Projects in communities that have been underserved by HFFI investment, including other national, state, and/or local HFFI programs (4 points).

- Projects also applying for a loan under the HFFI FARE Fund and who need the grant to make the project viable (3 points).

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 VIII – 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 period start 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
- Certification regarding Lobbying Activities and SF LLL, "Disclosure of Lobbying Activities," if applicable.
- RD Form 400-4, Civil Rights Assurances
- Environmental review form
- 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

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.

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 Award Requirements

Grantees shall remain in compliance with all applicable laws, regulations, Executive Orders, and other generally applicable requirements for the duration of the Grant Agreement including 2 CFR Parts 200, 400, 415, 416, 417, 418, 421, and 422. The most commonly referenced provisions are identified below.

Federal Financial Management and Internal Controls Requirements

Grantees are expected to comply with applicable federal financial management requirements included in the award's terms and conditions and 2 CFR Part 200.300-.309. This includes maintaining a financial management system in compliance with 2 CFR Part 200.302 and internal controls in compliance with 2 CFR Part 200.303. Failure to comply could result in Reinvestment Fund suspending Grantee's access to funds.

Program Income

Grantees must comply with the requirements of 2 CFR Part 200.307. Additionally, if program income is earned during the period of performance, grantees may use it in accordance with 2 CFR Part 200.307(e)(2), provided that you inform Reinvestment Fund in writing of your intent prior to the award date. However, if Grantees earn program income in excess of what can be used under 2 CFR Part 200.307(e)(2) or if they earn unanticipated program income, they must comply with 2 CFR Part 200.307(e)(1). Costs incidental to the generation of program income may be deducted from gross income to determine program income, provided these costs have not been charged to the award.

Procurement and Property Standards

Grantees must follow the procurement standards requirements in 2 CFR Parts 200.310-.327.

Cost Principles

Grantees must comply with the provisions in 2 CFR Part 200, most of which are contained in Subpart E.

Audits

Grantees must comply with the provisions in 2 CFR Part 200, Subpart F.

Record Retention and Access

Grantees must retain records related to this work performed under their Grant Agreement and allow access to them in accordance with 2 CFR Parts 200.334-.338.

Notice of Federal Interest

Federal interest means that the federal government has a stake in an asset bought or improved with federal money. USDA has a federal interest in the following assets if they are purchased with HFFI FARE Fund awards:

- *Real Property:* Land and any structures permanently affixed to it, such as buildings.
- *Equipment:* Items with a lifespan of more than one year and a per-unit cost of \$5,000 or more.
- *Supplies:* Items that are short-lived (less than one year) or cost less than \$5,000 per unit.

Any assets acquired or improved with federal funds will be held (e.g., lien, etc.) on behalf of awarded entities by Reinvestment Fund until the federal interest is no longer vested. Real property, equipment, or supplies with vested federal interest must be used exclusively for HFFI activities until the federal interest is no longer vested. See 2 CFR 200.310-316 for more information.

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 <https://www.fns.usda.gov/snap/logo-guidance>)

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.

Environmental Review of Eligible Projects

Grantees will be required to show compliance with the National Environmental Policy Act (NEPA). To demonstrate compliance, grantees must conduct an environmental review of each proposed project to be financed with HFFI grant funds to determine whether the project is classified as a categorical exclusion (CE) under 7 CFR Part 1970 (Environmental Policies and Procedures). Specifically, 7 CFR Part 1970.55 (CEs for multi-tiered actions) requires Grantee to determine whether each proposed project is a CE. Grantee will (i) conduct a screening of all proposed uses of funds to determine whether the proposed use is a CE under 7 CFR Parts 1970.53 or 1970.54, (ii) obtain sufficient information to make an evaluation of those proposals as provided in 7 CFR Part 1970.55(a)(2); (iii) document and maintain its conclusions regarding the applicability of a CE as provided in 7 CFR Part 1970.5(a)(3); and (iv) refer to Reinvestment Fund all proposals that are not CEs and that may have extraordinary circumstances as provided in 7 CFR Part 1970.55(a)(4). Reinvestment Fund's review of environmental documentation by third party experts may require a 4-6 week turnaround.

Build America, Buy America Act Requirements for Grant Awards Made to Non-Federal Entities

If grantee falls within the definition of Non-Federal Entities, defined by 2 CFR Part 200.1 as any "State, local government, Indian tribe, Institution of Higher Education, or nonprofit organization," and the HFFI project is an infrastructure project over \$250,000, then they must comply with the requirements of Section 70914 of the Build America, Buy America Act within the Infrastructure Investment and Jobs Act (Public Law 11758). See <https://www.rd.usda.gov/build-america-buy-america> for additional guidance.

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.

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.
- Ongoing monitoring of compliance with Federal Award Requirements, including environmental review and Build America, Buy America Act requirements.
- 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.

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.

PART IX – LOAN INFORMATION

Available Funding

At least \$16,000,000 is available for loans. Loan awards may be from \$500,000-\$5,000,000. We expect to close 3-8 loans for 2024-2025 with typical loan sizes of \$1M-\$3M. Loan requests under \$500,000 may be referred to other financial partners for consideration.

What We Will Fund

Financing 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 in a venue that accepts SNAP. HFFI FARE Fund loans will offer flexible, patient, and tailored capital for the proposed eligible project. This includes flexible credit risk and equity requirements, extended interest-only periods, and acceptance of non-traditional collateral. HFFI FARE Fund loans will be prepayable without penalty throughout their loan terms.

Loan types could include (but are not limited to):

- **Predevelopment:** Predevelopment loans can fund early-stage costs associated with projects, including application fees, legal, architecture, environmental investigations, market studies, property appraisals, zoning approvals and permitting, and deposits on property.
- **Acquisition Only:** Acquisition only loans finance the acquisition of real estate, typically either in advance of a full project closing or to allow for a stabilization and/or repositioning of property. Acquisition only loans may include a modest allocation for physical improvement of property of no more than 20% of total loan amount. Loans may include some amortization during the term.
- **Bridge Loans:** Bridge loans are made available to bridge secured commitments of project sources that cannot be immediately accessed such as public sector grants, wholesaler incentives, or capital campaign proceeds. Most typically, these loans are used to fund construction costs that will ultimately be paid for by committed project grants or Historic Tax Credit or other Tax Credit equity that do not fund until construction is completed or placed in service. Bridge loans may also be used to bridge proceeds of capital campaigns associated with major capital projects undertaken by nonprofit organizations. The term and repayment requirements of bridge loans will be structured to match the anticipated payment of the sources being bridged.

- **Construction:** Construction loans can fund both the hard and soft costs associated with development projects. Loans that include funding for acquisition but also include more than 20% of the total loan amount used for construction costs are also classified as Construction Loans.
- **Permanent:** Permanent loans allow for both fully amortizing loans as well as semi-permanent loans that amortize during the loan period based on an amortization period that exceeds the loan term and requires a balloon payment at maturity. Loans have a maximum term of 7 years and require amortizing principal & interest payments throughout the loan term. Perm loans have a maximum amortization term of 30 years.
- **Construction to Permanent:** Construction to Permanent Loans include a construction period consistent with the construction loan described above, followed by a permanent loan. Loans may bear interest only payments followed by amortization (the perm period).
- **NMTC Source Loans:** New Market Tax Credit (NMTC) source or leverage loans provide project financing for NMTC projects. Loans typically mirror the NMTC compliance period, may include interest only and/or provide for some amortization. This type of loan fills a gap in a project budget; it can bridge grants or capital campaigns or provide other gap funding. Uses are generally flexible, including machinery and equipment, construction, etc.
- **Equipment and 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 construction, including vehicles, machinery, equipment, technology, software, purchase of existing business assets, or other.
- **Working Capital and Other Soft Costs:** One-time soft costs such as training, consumer/community engagement, governance support, marketing and merchandising work, 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. Working capital (labor, inventory, cash reserves, etc.) may be considered as part of a larger loan package.

Indicative Loan Terms by Product Type

The following terms are subject to lender underwriting.

LOAN PRODUCTS				
<p>All loans subject to the following:</p> <p>Loan Minimum/Maximum: Loans range from \$500,000 - \$5,000,000</p> <p>Typical Expected Loan Size: \$1,000,000 - \$3,000,000</p> <p>Interest Rates: Interest rates may range between 0 to 6%, fixed with 3% being a typical rate.</p> <p>Equity Requirement: Applicants may be expected to contribute no less than 10% of project budget (not including HFFI FARE Fund grants) as equity contribution.</p> <p>Origination Fee: 1%</p> <p>Deposit: With issuance of term sheet Applicants for Loans may be required to provide a deposit to cover legal and third party diligence costs.</p> <p>Federal Compliance: All loans will be subject to USDA regulations regarding use of funds.</p>				
Loan Type	Term	Loan to Value (LTV) Max	Expected Collateral*	Notes
Predevelopment	up to 24 months interest only	90%	Real Estate; possible secondary sources	Funds market study, architectural drawings, and other soft costs; takeout must be identified
Acquisition	up to 36 months interest only	90%	Real Estate; possible secondary sources	Acquisition of real estate related to project; might include up to 20% of loan in real estate improvement
Bridge	up to 36 months interest only	100%	Grants, pledges, tax credits	Bridge proceeds from grants, donations, and other sources paid overtime like tax credits
Construction	up to 36 months interest only	90%	Real Estate; possible secondary sources	Funds both hard and soft costs associated with development projects; can include acquisition
Permanent	up to 84 months; typically, with 20–30-year hypothetical amortization period	90%	Real Estate; possible secondary sources	Funds for long-term debt that amortizes in full or part; can be in conjunction with construction loans
NMTC Source Loans	up to 96 months; may be interest only for up to 84 months, but typically up to 24 months interest only followed by a 60–72-month permanent period with 25–30-year amortization period	80-90%	Traditional NMTC collateral	Loans in conjunction with New Market Tax Credit financing. Can be leverage loans or direct loans
Equipment	up to 84 months; 60 months typical; no more than 12-month interest only period followed by 5–10-year amortization period. Amortization period based on type and useful life of equipment financed	80%	Equipment; possible secondary sources	Provides funding for machinery, equipment, furniture, and fixtures. Subject to federal sourcing guidelines

Working Capital	12-30 months interest only; may be termed out over short 1-3 years	60-80%^	Real Estate; possible secondary sources; guarantor analysis	Maximum amount: \$150,000; provides operating support for a ramp up in sales; typically, a part of an early-stage business or retail store opening.
------------------------	--	---------	---	---

Application Timelines

All applicants interested in loan funding must submit a Funding Inquiry form which will be reviewed to determine if the project meets HFFI eligibility. If determined to be eligible, applicants will be invited to submit a full loan application package which will be reviewed by Reinvestment Fund's lending team for feasibility and impact.

Funding Inquiries for loans will be accepted on a rolling basis. If invited, full application packages will be due 45 days after the invitation to submit. Based on initial evaluation of loan feasibility, Reinvestment Fund will issue a loan term sheet of indicative terms. A loan where the term sheet is accepted by the applicant will be advanced for full underwriting and credit approval and will be valid for 90 days. Approved Loans will be closed on a rolling basis.

Loan Terms

Terms for loan projects may be between 12 to 96 months depending on the loan product type. Please refer to the Loan Product chart above for the specific term length of the loan being requested.

Prepayment

Loans may be prepaid any time, with notice of prepayment of no less than 30 days.

PART X – SUBMITTING A LOAN APPLICATION

Loan 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 Funding Inquiry phase, as a full application for funding to the HFFI FARE Fund.

Type of Loan

Applicant must select the type(s) of loan they are seeking for their project.

- Predevelopment
- Acquisition Only
- Bridge
- Construction
- Construction to permanent loans for a new build, renovation, or expansion of a business
- Permanent
- NMTC Source Loan
- Equipment and Other Capital Needs
- Working Capital and Other Soft Costs

I. Narrative

Organization Overview and Project Team Qualifications (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 also describe the project team and/or project partners' experience and role relevant to the success of developing and operating the proposed project. This includes any architects, general contractors, or consultants.

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, including data on access points and possible competition. 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 the applicant is 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. Discuss status of physical location (owned, leases, contracted).

Need for and Use of Funds (500 words)

Describe the elements of the project for which the applicant is seeking financing, and how loan funds will be used if received based on your Funding Inquiry. Most relevant is why a loan is needed for the project, as well as what an HFFI loan will enable for the project, and the organization. If HFFI financing is part of a larger set of funding sources, describe what this loan will support within the project funding structure, as well as the source of other funding or financing, and the status of other funding sources.

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 FARE Fund.

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

Priorities

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

- How will the business model resulting from this project create or retain Quality Jobs (as defined earlier in this RFA) for low-income residents in the community? (100 words)
- How will the business model resulting from this project support regional food systems and locally grown foods to the maximum extent possible? (100 words)
- How will your program serve Rural areas? (100 words)
- Will the business model resulting from this project be accessible by public transit? (100 words)
- How will the project involve women-owned or controlled businesses? (100 words)
- How will the project involve Black, Indigenous, and People of Color (BIPOC)-owned or controlled businesses? (100 words)

Project Timeline (500 words)

Applicants will be asked to update from their Funding Inquiry submission the amount of time they will need to complete the project proposed. Terms for loan projects may be between 12 to 96 months depending on the loan product type. Applicants will also be asked to provide an overview of their project's timeline, identifying key activities and milestones throughout the loan 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 FARE Fund loan request by cost category. Describe with some detail how the budget figures were arrived at (such as quotes, estimates, or comparable figures) and the associated justification for each of the following cost categories included in your project:

- Predevelopment Costs
- Acquisition Costs
- Hard Costs
- Soft Costs
- Equipment
- Contingency
- Post Closing Costs / Operating Costs

Applicant's Total Project Costs or Budget should equal the sum of their HFFI FARE Fund Request and all other identified or requested sources so that applicant has a fully funded project budget.

III. Attachments

Organizational Budget

Applicants must submit the organizational budget for the current and next fiscal years.

Financial Statements

Applicants must submit the most recent three years of audited financial statements and/or unaudited year-to-date financial statements with comparison to budget.

Tax Returns

Applicants must submit most recent three years of tax returns (or 990s) with all schedules.

Site Documentation

- Description of facility project (as-is condition, scope of work, why it is necessary, how its design and location serve needs of organization) and Applicant's previous experience with similar projects.
- Copy of lease, agreement of sale, or deed showing ownership of property (whichever is applicable).
- Market Studies, trade area analysis, evidence of demand/need for business or service.
- Available copies of appraisal and environmental reports (Brownfield or other site-specific designation, if applicable).

Organization Structure information

Applicant must submit applicable information on their corporate structure which may include organizational documents, list of board members and their bios, ownership structure, etc.

Operating Projections

Applicants must submit at least three years of projections in an Excel workbook for the operations of the proposed Retail Outlet or Food Enterprise. Financial projections must be for the expected loan term and may include estimates for sales projections, gross margins and operating expenses. Projections should be as detailed as possible, based on best available information, including a market study, industry standards, and comparable projects. Where possible, applicants should include details concerning how the assumptions were arrived at, in addition to general sources of income. Successful projects will have projections that demonstrate the sustainability of operations beyond the start-up period and throughout the term of the requested loans.

Sources and Uses

Applicants must provide summarized sources and uses noting all funding sources for the project, the status of these funds (i.e. applied or committed), and details of uses of funds in the overall larger project.

Letters of Community 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.

Letters of support may only be provided at the time of application submission by uploading completed

letters of support into the SmartSimple grants portal along with all other application materials. Letters of support should not be sent directly to Reinvestment Fund.

Organization Reference

Applicants should include at least two external organizational references who are able to discuss your organization's financial experience and/or programs or operations.

PART XI— LOAN APPLICATION REVIEW

Invited loan applications submitted by eligible applicants will be reviewed by Reinvestment Fund's HFFI FARE Fund lending team. Loan application determinations will be based on the information provided in the application. Loan applications are reviewed for preliminary feasibility of financing, upon which a term sheet or summary of indicative terms is issued.

If acceptable to the applicant, Reinvestment Fund will begin the due diligence phase of underwriting which includes but is not limited to evaluation of the criteria described below. Final review and credit decision recommendation will be completed by Reinvestment Fund's Chief Credit Officer.

Loans are approved by Reinvestment Fund within tiered approval authority guidelines based on aggregate exposure and other factors determined in underwriting.

Applications selected for a loan 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 and Project Team Qualifications

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. We emphasize 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. Project Scope and Strength

Projects will be evaluated for the strength of their proposed concept to improve food access through food retail, food wholesale distribution and food enterprises. We are looking for projects addressing a clearly defined problem and proposed solutions, with operating projections supported by market analysis and/or community assessment and industry metrics or historical financials.

C. Financial Strength of Borrower and Guarantor

Three years of audited financial statements are preferred. Internally prepared or accountant prepared statements may be acceptable in lieu of audits, taking loan size and risk profile of loan and borrower into consideration. Personal financial statements and tax returns are required of all individuals providing loan guarantees, including schedule of contingent liabilities. Reinvestment Fund will also obtain authorization from individual guarantors to run credit checks and review the credit report for each guarantor during underwriting.

D. Loan Structure and Collateral

Loans may be secured by first position, perfected liens on subject collateral, which may include fee simple mortgage/deed of trust on real estate, leasehold interest in real estate, equipment, grants receivables, contract receivables, business assets and cash accounts. NMTC Source Leverage Loans may be secured by assignments of the underlying collateral. In some cases, shared, *pari passu* interest in collateral may be considered where relationship among the lenders with respect to collateral would be memorialized in an intercreditor agreement. Subordinate liens on collateral may be permitted based on considerations such as borrower strength, project/business model strength, mission alignment, and history with senior lender. Loans will likely not cover 100% of project costs and will require equity/other sources of financing to cover project costs. See Loan Products Table for Loan to Value requirements.

E. Construction Diligence

Project scopes that include construction will have additional diligence requirements. A third-party construction inspector will be engaged to perform a plan and cost review for all projects involving construction exceeding a cost of \$500,000 and including more than a limited scope (e.g. roof replacement). Construction costs will need to be validated by guaranteed maximum price (GMP) or similar construction contract. Project budget should include a contingency equal to at least 10% of total construction budget for projects involving rehabilitation and 5% for new construction. The budget should also allow for a soft cost contingency equal to no less than 3% of total soft costs. A Payment and Performance Bond should be obtained for all projects where the construction budget is in excess of \$4 million.

F. Repayment Analysis

Project operating projections, cashflow statements, and financial statements of the applicant and guarantors will be analyzed to evaluate the feasibility of the project to carry debt financing, ability to achieve and maintain financial covenants, and to repay the loan. Sources of repayment must be clearly identified and defined, evidencing established track record and stability. Assumptions of growth in sales or other revenue sources should be reasonably supported by track record and/or market conditions.

G. Refinance

For loans with balloon payments at maturity, the applicant will need to seek debt financing at loan maturity. For such FARE Fund loans, during loan review, project operating projections and cashflow statements of the applicant will be analyzed to evaluate the feasibility of the project to carry debt financing after the FARE Fund loan matures, at a debt service coverage ratio acceptable to commercial financial institutions (typically 1.25x).

H. Reserves

For loans that include a period with no or insufficient cashflow, interest, or debt service reserve may be required to ensure that the borrower has sufficient funds to make payments on the loan, upon review of construction and stabilization period cashflows.

Priority Areas

Priority will be given to projects that have the following attributes:

- 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 in Rural Areas (as defined earlier in this RFA).

- Will involve women-owned or controlled businesses
- Will involve and /or serve Black, Indigenous, and People of Color (BIPOC)-owned or controlled businesses and communities.
- 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 XII— LOAN ADMINISTRATION

Successful applicants will be notified through a term sheet that sets forth the amount of funds to be loaned, the terms and conditions of the loan, and other pertinent instructions and information regarding funding. Borrowers 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.

Once Borrower has met all closing conditions and loan documents are satisfactory to Lender, then the loan will close. It is expected that projects receiving Loan financing from the FARE Fund will begin on or before the closing date of the Loan.

Required documentation may include but is not limited to:

- A final, approved budget, project workplan, and project impact metrics
- RD Form 400-4, Civil Rights Assurances
- Certification regarding Lobbying Activities and SF LLL, "Disclosure of Lobbying Activities," if applicable
- Acknowledgement of Environmental Review requirements
- Certificate describing the Grantee's current insurance
- Financial Statements
- W-9: Request for Taxpayer Identification Number and Certification
- Organization documents, including but not limited to certificates of formation/articles of incorporation, officer incumbency certificate, bylaws/operating agreement/partnership agreement, borrowing resolution, good standing certificates, 501c3 determination letter
- Know your customer information sheet for all applicable Borrowers, Guarantors and authorized signers.
- UCC/Lien/Judgement Searches
- Guarantor agreement
- Bank Account information for ACH payments to the loan
- Wiring instructions for disbursements
- Impact Reporting Questionnaire
- Borrower/Billing Information Sheet
- Federal Regulatory Compliance Form
- Insurance: Evidence of liability insurance, hazard insurance, flood insurance (if applicable), builder's risk and all other insurance required by Lender
- Flood Search (if the loan is secured by real estate)
- Title insurance (if the loan is secured by real estate)
- Current appraisal (if required by Lender)
- Environmental Study (if required by Lender)
- Alta Survey (if required by Lender)
- Construction Loans

- Plan and cost review
- Construction contract
- Contractors license
- Evidence of zoning compliance
- Evidence of utility availability
- Plans and Specifications
- Construction schedule
- Site plan
- Permits/Licenses
- P&P Bond (including obligee rider) if loan is above \$4MM

Loans will be funded with federal funds and, as such, loan recipients are responsible for ensuring that their activities comply with all applicable federal regulations. Loan terms and conditions, borrower requirements, and applicable regulations will be described in a Loan Agreement to be signed between Reinvestment Fund and the Borrower. Other typical loan documents include a note, security agreement, guaranty agreement, collateral documents such as a mortgage or deed of trust, state and county UCC-1 financing statements and environmental indemnities.

Changes in Budget or Project Plans

All funds loaned under this RFA may be used only for the purpose for which they are loaned 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, borrowers 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 Award Requirements

Borrowers shall remain in compliance with all applicable laws, regulations, Executive Orders, and other generally applicable requirements for the duration of the Loan Agreement including 2 CFR Parts 200, 400, 415, 416, 417, 418, 421, and 422. The most commonly referenced provisions are identified below.

Federal Financial Management and Internal Controls Requirements

Borrowers are expected to comply with applicable federal financial management requirements included in the award's terms and conditions and 2 CFR Part 200.300-.309. This includes maintaining a financial management system in compliance with 2 CFR Part 200.302 and internal controls in compliance with 2 CFR Part 200.303. Failure to comply could result in Reinvestment Fund suspending Borrowers' access to funds.

Procurement and Property Standards

Borrowers must follow the procurement standards requirements in 2 CFR Parts 200.310-.327.

Cost Principles

Borrowers must comply with the provisions in 2 CFR Part 200, most of which are contained in Subpart E.

Audits

Borrowers must comply with the provisions in 2 CFR Part 200, Subpart F.

Record Retention and Access

Borrowers must retain records related to this work performed under their loan agreement and allow access to them in accordance with 2 CFR Parts 200.334-.338.

Notice of Federal Interest

Federal interest means that the federal government has a stake in an asset bought or improved with federal money. USDA has a federal interest in the following assets if they are purchased with HFFI FARE Fund awards:

- *Real Property*: Land and any structures permanently affixed to it, such as buildings.
- *Equipment*: Items with a lifespan of more than one year and a per-unit cost of \$5,000 or more.
- *Supplies*: Items that are short-lived (less than one year) or cost less than \$5,000 per unit.

Any assets acquired or improved with federal funds will be held (e.g., lien, etc.) on behalf of awarded entities by Reinvestment Fund until the federal interest is no longer vested. Real property, equipment, or supplies with vested federal interest must be used exclusively for HFFI activities until the federal interest is no longer vested. See 2 CFR 200.310-316 for more information.

Environmental Review of Eligible Projects

Borrowers will be required to show compliance with the National Environmental Policy Act (NEPA). To demonstrate compliance, borrowers must conduct an environmental review of each proposed project to be financed with HFFI funds to determine whether the project is classified as a categorical exclusion (CE) under 7 CFR Part 1970 (Environmental Policies and Procedures). Specifically, 7 CFR Part 1970.55 (CEs for multi-tiered actions) requires a Borrower to determine whether each proposed project is a CE. Borrower will (i) conduct a screening of all proposed uses of funds to determine whether the proposed use is a CE under 7 CFR Parts 1970.53 or 1970.54, (ii) obtain sufficient information to make an evaluation of those proposals as provided in 7 CFR Part 1970.55(a)(2); (iii) document and maintain its conclusions regarding the applicability of a CE as provided in 7 CFR Part 1970.5(a)(3); and (iv) refer to Reinvestment Fund all proposals that are not CEs and that may have extraordinary circumstances as provided in 7 CFR Part 1970.55(a)(4). Reinvestment Fund's review of environmental documentation by third party experts may require a 4-6 week turnaround.

Build America, Buy America Act Requirements for Grant Awards Made to Non-Federal

If borrower falls within the definition of Non-Federal Entities, defined by 2 CFR Part 200.1 as any "State, local government, Indian tribe, Institution of Higher Education, or nonprofit organization," and the HFFI project is an infrastructure project over \$250,000, then they must comply with the requirements of Section 70914 of the Build America, Buy America Act within the Infrastructure Investment and Jobs Act (Public Law 11758). See <https://www.rd.usda.gov/build-america-buy-america> for additional guidance.

Promotional 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 <https://www.fns.usda.gov/snap/logo-guidance>)

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

For ongoing monitoring, borrowers will be required to submit project performance, financial reports, and covenants and impact measures periodically during the loan period and, as applicable, after the loan has been repaid. The reporting requirements will be captured in loan documentation which would include but will not be limited to loan agreements, promissory notes, mortgages, security agreements, and other relevant legal documents.

Borrower reporting requirements may include, but are not limited to:

- Annual borrower financial statements (audited if available)
- Annual guarantor financial statements (if applicable)
- Borrower federal tax return
- Guarantor federal tax returns
- Annual rent roll (if applicable)
- Final progress report at the end of the loan
- Ongoing monitoring of compliance with Federal Award Requirements, including environmental review and Build America, Buy America Act requirements.

Noncompliance with Program Policy

Borrowers 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 Loan Agreements, and all applicable Federal Laws. If any borrower 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 borrower fails to take required corrective action within the established timeline, then Reinvestment Fund will immediately suspend that borrower's access to loan funds and may terminate the loan agreement as a result of noncompliance.

PART XIII — TECHNICAL ASSISTANCE INFORMATION

Available Funding

At least \$1,500,000 is available for technical assistance (TA). Technical assistance award amounts will vary but are unlikely to be more than \$100,000 per project. The number of projects that receive TA will depend on the need identified.

All applicants interested in technical assistance must submit a Funding Inquiry which will be reviewed to determine if the project meets HFFI eligibility. If determined to be eligible, applicants will be invited to submit a full TA application.

Technical assistance applications will be accepted on a rolling basis. TA will be provided on a merit-based, non-competitive basis to eligible beneficiaries as a grant or through TA providers contracted directly with Reinvestment Fund. Receipt of a technical assistance award does not guarantee an organization's selection for future HFFI grant or loan funding.

What We Will Fund

Technical assistance will be provided to eligible organizations that are working to plan or develop a food retail outlet or food enterprise that seeks to improve access to healthy food in underserved areas through food retail. Funding will support early-stage planning and development of projects aiming to strengthen, expand, and innovate within the food retail sector or food retail supply chain. Technical assistance applicants who are also interested in an implementation grant should be mindful that implementation grant projects should have site control via an executed lease agreement, purchase agreement, or full property ownership completed feasibility tasks, and a timeline for opening within the performance period.

Current or past grantees with immediate technical assistance needs that would fortify the capacity and sustainability of the project are eligible to apply. 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. Food retail business models include brick and mortar supermarkets but are not limited only to brick and mortar retailers. Food enterprise business models must contribute through the food system or food supply chain, to the availability of Staple and Perishable Foods through retail sales at SNAP authorized food retailers in Underserved Areas.

Applicants must demonstrate how the business model(s) they are planning will contribute to food access through the availability of Staple and Perishable Foods for retail sale. Funds may be used for planning the expansion of an existing business model, if the expanded business model will serve new underserved populations that are not already serviced by the existing business. Funds can be used for expenses that will directly support the planning and overall sustainability of the new or expanded business model.

TA may be offered as a grant to an eligible project or through TA providers contracted directly with Reinvestment Fund in order to complete approved early-stage planning, predevelopment, or business assistance needs. TA will be provided to selected eligible organizations where expert guidance would further clarify, advance, or strengthen a project that supports HFFI goals and priorities.

Proposed uses of funds could include (but are not limited to):

- **Community Engagement:** consumer/community engagement support and activities, governance support & activities, community food assessments
- **Business, feasibility, and operations planning/development:** Information gathering and decision-making activities such as market research or personnel that will support outreach activities, feasibility

studies, financial analysis, business/strategic planning, development of proformas and business financials, staff training, financial or development consultants, project management, marketing & advertisement (including online and print), etc.

- **Construction predevelopment:** site location analysis, appraisals, architectural or design assistance, and soft costs that will indirectly support the acquisition and/or pre-construction preparation of land such as legal support, permitting, fees, and environmental/energy assessments
- **Other capital needs:** including one-time investments into capital needs for the planning and development of a business model's operations such as capital campaign planning, or development of technology (i.e. build out of a website) that will operationalize the next phase of the project

TA will be awarded 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 will negotiate final budgets, including disallowing ineligible costs, with TA recipients. If funds are provided directly to a project to complete technical assistance needs, the project will need to follow Federal procurement requirements.

Application Timelines

All applicants interested in technical assistance funding must submit a Funding Inquiry form which will be reviewed to determine if the project meets HFFI eligibility. If determined to be eligible, applicants will be invited to submit a full application for review.

Funding inquiries for technical assistance will be accepted on a rolling basis until September 1, 2025. If invited, full applications will be due 45 days after the invitation to submit.

Technical assistance awards will be announced no earlier than:

- July 2025
- November 2025

If your application is not selected, your application will be considered for the next round.

Performance Period

If awarded, technical assistance projects and related contractual agreements should be completed within 12 months.

PART XIV — SUBMITTING A TECHNICAL ASSISTANCE APPLICATION

Technical Assistance 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 Funding Inquiry phase, as a full application for funding to the HFFI FARE Fund. Technical assistance will be available for new, existing, or expanding projects in the planning, predevelopment, or implementation stages and for current or past grantees with immediate technical assistance needs that would fortify the capacity and sustainability of the project. Operating capital is not an eligible use of technical assistance funding.

Project Parameters

Please share any parameters, constraints, or deadlines we should be aware of in finding a match with a technical assistance provider and developing a scope of services. If you have a provider or providers in mind, please share their names.

Project Locations

If site location information from their Funding Inquiry has changed, applicants will be asked to provide an update, which could include the status of site identification, updated project address, or a description of the neighborhood(s) the business will most likely be located in and/or serve. Program staff will review any additional project location information for eligibility which may change the eligibility of the application.

I. Narrative

Project Summary (150 words)

Applicants must provide a brief description of the project, including an overview of proposed grant funded planning, predevelopment activities or business assistance needs, and the ultimate goals and outcomes of these activities.

Organization Overview & 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 and role relevant to the success of developing and/or operating the proposed project. If the applicant does not have relevant industry experience, the application should describe how they will seek qualified services in order to carry out a successful 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 completed Community Food Assessment or a market study to describe the challenges to food access in this community or describe the need for a Community Food Assessment or market study to be conducted. 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.

Community Engagement & Involvement (500 words)

Describe how the project has engaged the communities, populations, and/or market that it plans to serve. This should include the process used to ensure inclusion of targeted populations and communities; the extent to which community members have been involved in development and design of the proposed project; and any challenges that have arisen and strategies to address them. If community engagement activities have not yet occurred, the applicant should describe the engagement plan and next steps.

Use of Funds & Project Objectives (500 words)

Describe the overall planning, predevelopment, or business assistance activities for which you are seeking grant funding. Applicants should describe how grant funding will be used if received, 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. Most relevant is why these activities were selected, and how they will support the ideation, information gathering, design, planning, and development of a food retail or food enterprise project that will ultimately improve access to fresh, healthy food through food retail in underserved areas. Applicants may include in their description the community or market needs to be

met; the goals of the project; activities that have been completed to date; relevant providers that will be participating in planning activities or the need to identify providers to support planning activities.

Project Outcomes (250 Words)

Describe the direct outcomes expected as a result of the planning, predevelopment, or business assistance activities for which you are seeking grant funding. This should include the results of these activities that would be accomplished by the end of the grant period and the specific changes (outcomes) that will occur as a result of these activities. Applicants should describe how grant funding will enable the development of a new or expanded food retail or food enterprise project that can be implemented and/or sustained after the grant period is over.

Capital Access & Project Sustainability (250 words)

Describe how this grant award would leverage additional funding and/or resources to support the long-term sustainability and execution of a food retail or food enterprise project. If grant funding is part of a larger set of funding sources, describe the sources, uses, and status of other funding or financing, including funding you may still need to acquire to make the project feasible.

Project Timeline (500 words)

Applicants should describe the amount of time needed to complete the project (up to 12 months) and an overview of their project's timeline, as well as a description of the overall project timing and relevant factors influencing project timing and success. Applicants will be asked to upload a table identifying key project milestones and activities, with relevant dates, to be completed during the grant period.

Priorities

Applicants may answer the following optional questions to describe, if applicable, their project and ultimate business model's impacts relating to the HFFI FARE Fund priorities:

- How will the business model resulting from this project create or retain Quality Jobs (as defined earlier in this RFA) for low-income residents in the community? (100 words)
- How will the business model resulting from this project support regional food systems and locally grown foods to the maximum extent possible? (100 words)
- How will your program serve Rural areas? (100 words)
- Will the business model resulting from this project be accessible by public transit? (100 words)
- How will the project involve women-owned or controlled businesses? (100 words)
- How will the project involve Black, Indigenous, and People of Color (BIPOC)-owned or controlled businesses? (100 words)

II. Budget

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

Personnel

Include each staff person (name and title) who will have a substantive role in the proposed activities, their # of hours or % of FTE, salary, and the amount proposed to be covered by the grant. Personnel costs should be reasonable for the services rendered, conform to the established written policy of your organization, and consistently be applied to both Federal and

non-Federal activities.

Fringe

Provide the fringe benefit rates for each of the personnel listed above for which you are requesting grant funds. The costs of fringe benefits should be reasonable and in line with the established policies of your organization.

Travel

Provide trip details and purpose for all travel requested. Travel in this section is for staff of the applicant organization. Travel expenses must be in accordance with the applicant organization's established travel policies, which will be adhered to when completing the above-mentioned trips, in accordance with 2 CFR Part 200.475 or 48 CFR Part 31.2.

Contractual

As applicable, describe relevant contractors or consultants, listing contractual services such as predevelopment activities, third-party consultant or design fees, trainings, software acquisition/development, etc. This should include a brief description of each service and the total amount of grant award to be allocated to each service during the requested grant period.

Materials/Supplies:

List all short-lived (less than one year) items under \$5,000 per unit, 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.

Indirect Charges:

If you do not have a Federally approved negotiated indirect cost rate (NICRA), 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. However, you must comply with any approved negotiated indirect cost rate that you have received from the Federal government, so if you have a NICRA, you should use that rate to calculate your indirect costs. Regardless of which way you calculate indirect costs, you may not charge more than 10 percent of your total award amount as indirect costs.

Program Income:

As applicable, list program income that will be generated by the proposed activities. As described in 2 CFR Part 200, program income means gross income earned by the non-Federal entity that is directly generated by a supported activity or earned as a result of the Federal award during the Grant Period. Program income includes, but is not limited to, income from fees for services performed, the use or rental of real or personal property acquired under Federal awards, the sale of commodities or items fabricated under a Federal award, license fees and royalties on patents and copyrights, and principal and interest on loans made with Federal award funds. Interest earned on advances of Federal funds is not program income. Refer to 2 CFR Part 200.307 for more information on Program Income. To the extent possible, all program income identified in

the grant agreement budget may be utilized according to the Additive Method (see 2 CFR Part 200.307(e)(2)).

III. Attachments

Sources and Uses

If your HFFI grant request is part of a larger project with additional sources of funding and activities, applicants should 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. Letters of support that demonstrate engagement of the local community are recommended. In addition, letters of support highlighting community, stakeholder, and targeted beneficiary support can be provided. Letters of support are not required, and applicants who do not include letters of support will not be penalized.

Letters of support may only be provided at the time of application submission by uploading completed letters of support into the SmartSimple grants portal along with all other application materials. Letters of support should not be sent directly to Reinvestment Fund.

PART XV – TECHNICAL ASSISTANCE REVIEW AND AWARD ADMINISTRATION

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 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. Applications for TA will be reviewed on a rolling basis by Reinvestment Fund staff and will be provided on a merit-based, non-competitive basis to eligible projects.

A technical assistance award may be administered through one of two options.

Option 1: Non-financial assistance provided by recommended specialists within the Reinvestment Fund network. If the project is selected for an award, Reinvestment Fund will directly contract with the provider who will conduct approved contractual services up to a 12-month period.

Option 2: Financial assistance provided directly to the applicant to manage the technical assistance project with a provider of their choice to conduct approved TA services up to a 12-month period. In this scenario, the TA recipient will be subject to the federal regulations listed below.

Successful applicants will be notified electronically if they are selected to receive technical assistance. Reinvestment Fund will work with applicants to determine if Option 1 or 2 is the best options for completing the TA project.

Expected Program Reporting Requirements

All Technical Assistance awardees will be required to submit performance progress and financial reports after

the completion of their TA project. The reporting requirements will be included in the award terms and conditions in the award notification and within the financial assistance agreement (if applicable). If there are any program or award-specific terms, those will be identified also.

Technical assistance recipient reporting requirements may include, but are not limited to:

- Requests for reimbursement or advance of funds along with appropriate backup documentation at regular intervals throughout the award period
- Ongoing monitoring of compliance with Federal Award Requirements
- Final progress report, financial closeout report when the technical assistance project is completed
- Ongoing reporting after the project closeout, including brief general project updates

For Financial Assistance TA

If receiving a technical assistance award as financial assistance, 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 technical assistance award, the award effective date, and other pertinent instructions and information regarding funding. Technical Assistance projects will be expected to begin within 90 days of the award effective date. Grantees will be asked to submit additional documentation, forms required for federal financial assistance, and other information as applicable during the funding process as a condition of receiving the technical assistance award.

This documentation includes:

- A final, approved budget and project workplan
- The name of the authorized signatory for the Grantee
- Certification regarding Lobbying Activities and SF LLL, "Disclosure of Lobbying Activities," if applicable.
- RD Form 400-4, Civil Rights Assurances
- Environmental review form
- 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

Technical assistance awards will be funded with federal funds and, as such, award recipients are responsible for ensuring that their activities comply with all applicable federal regulations provided in 2 CFR part 200. Award terms and conditions, grantee requirements, and applicable regulations will be described in a Grant Agreement to be signed between Reinvestment Fund and the Grantee.

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 Award Requirements

Grantees shall remain in compliance with all applicable laws, regulations, Executive Orders, and other 25 generally applicable requirements for the duration of the Grant Agreement including 2 CFR Parts 200, 400, 415, 416, 417, 418, 421, and 422. The most commonly referenced provisions are identified below.

Federal Financial Management and Internal Controls Requirements

Grantees are expected to comply with applicable federal financial management requirements included in the award's terms and conditions and 2 CFR Part 200.300-.309. This includes maintaining a financial management system in compliance with 2 CFR Part 200.302 and internal controls in compliance with 2 CFR Part 200.303. Failure to comply could result in Reinvestment Fund suspending Grantee's access to funds.

Program Income

Grantees must comply with the requirements of 2 CFR Part 200.307. Additionally, if program income is earned during the period of performance, grantees may use it in accordance with 2 CFR Part 200.307(e)(2), provided that you inform Reinvestment Fund in writing of your intent prior to the award date. However, if Grantees earn program income in excess of what can be used under 2 CFR Part 200.307(e)(2) or if they earn unanticipated program income, they must comply with 2 CFR Part 200.307(e)(1). Costs incidental to the generation of program income may be deducted from gross income to determine program income, provided these costs have not been charged to the award.

Procurement and Property Standards

Grantees must follow the procurement standards requirements in 2 CFR Parts 200.310-.327.

Cost Principles

Grantees must comply with the provisions in 2 CFR Part 200, most of which are contained in Subpart E.

Audits

Grantees must comply with the provisions in 2 CFR Part 200, Subpart F.

Record Retention and Access

Grantees must retain records related to this work performed under their Grant Agreement and allow access to them in accordance with 2 CFR Parts 200.334-.338.

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 <https://www.fns.usda.gov/snap/logo-guidance>)

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.

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.