

MICHIGAN LOCAL FOOD COUNCIL NETWORK SEED GRANT PROGRAM

REQUEST FOR PROPOSALS

Grant Period: February 1, 2023 – September 30, 2023

Background and Grant Program Goal

The Michigan Local Food Council Network (MLFCN) was formed by the Michigan State University Center for Regional Food Systems (CRFS) in 2015 to provide a platform for peer-to-peer learning through which local food councils build their capacities to work on food and food policy issues, both individually and collectively. The Network is convened by CRFS and guided by an Advisory Team of network members.

Development of a connected set of active, high-capacity local food councils in Michigan will help address local food and food policy issues, build local food leaders, advance equity in the food system, and accelerate progress on the collective goals of the Michigan Good Food Charter. CRFS developed the Michigan Local Food Council Network Seed Grant Program to help local food councils build capacity and accomplish their goals.

These grants, up to \$5,000, offer support for existing councils to expand their capacity and newly-forming councils to accelerate their development. The grant program also aims to increase connection and opportunities for peer-to-peer learning among Michigan's councils through participation in the MLFCN. Based on input from the Network, some of the areas these grants could be used for include:

- Hiring staff or consultant(s) to support local food council development and/or council operations
- Supporting councils in building internal fund development capacity or hiring consultant(s) to aid in fund development
- Conducting strategic planning
- Conducting community food systems or community food policy assessments
- Conducting equity or food justice training
- Supporting communications materials development and/or publication
- Providing training for council members and/or general public on food councils, food systems, or related topics
- Facilitating equitable participation in food council events or activities, such as:
 - Provision of childcare at events or activities
 - Provision of food at events or activities
 - Stipends for council or MLFCN meeting participation

- Funding via stipends, mileage reimbursements or per diem food expenses for local food council members’ attendance at events such as site visits with local food councils in peer communities or educational experiences relevant to food council goals

The list above is not meant to be exhaustive and grant funds may be requested for other areas. We believe councils are best able to tell us what their councils’ and communities’ needs are.

Funds can support relationship-building with and education of elected or appointed government staff and officials on policy matters. However, seed grant funds may not be used for lobbying local, state, or federal elected officials. Lobbying is defined as attempting to influence legislation by directly contacting or asking others to contact members of a legislative body or government officials or by encouraging the public to take action on a specific piece of legislation or rule.

Process and Timeline

MLFCN is using a shared gifting model to involve Network participants in collaborative and equitable funding decision-making. This model and the MLFCN process will be discussed as part of the MLFCN monthly meeting on November 17, 2022, 10-11:30am ([Zoom link](#)). Please plan to participate in this meeting if your council is considering an application. The meeting will be recorded and made available as needed.

This process will include applicant council representatives and members of other (non-applicant) councils in the review team. Questions and feedback on applicant proposals will be central to the review process and applicants will be asked to revise proposals based on that input. When proposals are finalized, the review team will recommend an allocation of the total pot of funds (\$25,000) across projects. Some projects may be funded at less than their requested amount. Review team members will determine the most effective distribution of funds to support both individual council goals and contribute to the learning and strength of the Network as a whole.

The timeline for this process is:

November 10, 2022	RFP released
November 17, 2022 at 10am - MLFCN monthly meeting	Seed Grant & Introduction to Shared Gifting info session
January 11, 2023 at 6pm	Proposals due
January 11-17, 2023	Proposal review by MLFCN staff
By January 18, 2023	Shared Gifting Team members receive proposals
Week of January 23, 2023	Shared Gifting Team meeting #1 (via Zoom): Sharing of projects, questions and requests. Feedback and suggestions will be provided to applicants councils, who may revise proposals based on this input.
Week of January 23, 2023	Applicants revise proposals

(between meetings #1 and 2)	
Week of January 23, 2023 (2-3 days after meeting #1)	Shared Gifting Team meeting #2 (via Zoom): Sharing of revisions. Decisions on fund distribution.
January 30, 2023	Grants announced
February 1, 2023	Grant period starts
May/June 2023	Mid-point check-in conversation with MLFCN coordinator
September 30, 2023	Grant period ends
October 31, 2023	Final report due

Eligibility for the Seed Grant Program

Existing and developing Michigan local food councils or food policy councils are eligible to apply. A local food council is defined as a group of people convening on a recurring basis around a defined Michigan-based geographic area to assess and recommend practices and policies that affect one or more aspects of the food system. The council may be part of an existing organization, but funds requested must be used entirely toward the work of the council.

Seed grant recipients must be a U.S. business entity located in Michigan, whether nonprofit, for profit, or governmental unit, and provide a signed W-9 with a federal tax ID number upon establishment of an award. If the local food council does not have a federal tax ID number, it may enlist a Michigan-based fiduciary partner that does. The grant will not cover fees or indirect costs to a fiduciary partner.

CRFS Expectations of Grantees

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

- Grantees will participate in at least half of the MLFCN meetings during the grant period. Both in-person (dates and locations TBD) or monthly virtual meetings (third Thursday of each month at 10am) count toward this requirement;
- Grantees are expected to commit to sharing their learnings with the network and/or other grantees and engaging with other network members;
- Councils funded by seed grants are expected to prioritize equity in their work, and council membership should reflect the racial and ethnic diversity of the community or communities it serves;
- Grantees must be willing to be interviewed and/or complete one or two surveys about lessons learned (conducted by CRFS project evaluators);
- Grantees must submit a brief report on project outcomes within one month of the end of the

grant, as well as engage in a mid-term check-in consultation with a MLFCN coordinator.

Proposal Guidelines

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

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

In addition, one to three letters or video clips demonstrating support are recommended, but not required. If included, a letter/video of support should be from someone outside the council or team working to establish the council explaining how the existing or forming council and/or community would benefit from the resources.

Other Important Seed Grant Proposal Considerations

- MLFCN in-person and monthly virtual meeting schedules can be found at [foodsystems.msu.edu/our-work/local food council network/events](https://foodsystems.msu.edu/our-work/local-food-council-network/events).
- The grant term is February 1-September 30, 2023. Work on the project does not have to start February 1, but that is the earliest it can begin.
- Priority will be given to councils that have not received MLFCN funding (via learning cohorts) in the past year.
- A council may request up to \$5,000. Final grant award amounts will be collaboratively determined by the review team.
- Awards will be determined through a participatory grantmaking process (with the review team comprised of applicants and other council representatives). Applicants may be asked to adjust their request based on the needs or suggestions of the group.
- Grantees must participate in a mid-term check-in meeting (one hour or less) with a MLFCN coordinator about halfway through the grant period. Grantees must submit a short

report on final project outcomes within one month of the end of the grant.

- Grantees will receive the seed grant funds at the start of the grant.
- CRFS will issue a news release with the list of all Michigan Local Food Council Network Seed Grantees awarded through this RFP in a timely manner after you have been notified of funding decision. We ask that you coordinate any local news releases with this news release by CRFS.

Nominations for Shared Gifting Team

The Shared Gifting Team will review applications and make a recommendation for the allocation of seed grant funds. We intend for the Shared Gifting Team to be representative of the diversity of Michigan and its councils. Any local food council participating in the Michigan Local Food Council Network through attendance at virtual or in-person meetings and/or receiving or applying for previous seed grants are welcome to nominate a single representative of their council for the Shared Gifting Team; this can be oneself or another member. Shared Gifting Team members must be active participants in a council, but do not have to be current or former leaders or staff of the council.

All councils applying for the current seed grant funding will designate one representative to the Shared Gifting Team within their application.

Shared Gifting Team members will be offered a \$100 stipend to acknowledge the time they contribute to reviewing applications and meeting.

Nominations should be submitted via Google form at <https://forms.gle/QKJcY8SPJ1wopfkr8> and include:

- Name of food council
- Name of nominee
- Role of nominee in food council
- How nominee represents the diversity of the community of the local food council
- E-mail and phone number of nominee
- Nominee's [availability for two review team meetings](#) up to five hours during the week of January 23, 2023.

Shared Gifting Team nominations should be submitted by January 11, but we encourage you to do so as soon as possible to facilitate Team meeting scheduling.

Submission and Review

- Proposals and Shared Gifting Team nominations are due by **6:00 pm on Wednesday, January**

11, 2023.

- Grant funding applicants should complete the MLFCN Seed Grant Request for Funding form available on the CRFS website at <https://www.canr.msu.edu/news/mlfcn-seed-grant-program-rfp-2023>. The application may be completed entirely in writing or a portion of it (the project-based questions) may be responded to in a video recording.
- Shared Gifting Team nominations (for representatives from councils not submitting funding requests) should be submitted at <https://forms.gle/QKJcY8SPJ1wopfkr8>.
- Proposals should be e-mailed as an attachment to Liz Gensler at gensler@msu.edu. A confirmation e-mail will be sent within 1 business day of receiving your proposal.
- Proposals will be reviewed by representatives of food councils in the MLFCN.
- You will receive notice of a decision of your proposal by February 1, 2023.

For more information or questions on the grant funding or review team nominations, contact Liz Gensler at gensler@msu.edu.