
Fiscal Year 2023 Description of Funded Projects

Number of Grants Awarded: 10
Amount of Funds Awarded: \$4,418,541

For more information, please visit the grant program's website:
<https://www.ams.usda.gov/services/grants/rfsp>

NOTE: The below project descriptions were provided by the grant recipients. The views expressed in the descriptions do not represent the views of or endorsements by the United States Government or the United States Department of Agriculture.

Arkansas

Recipient: Division of Agriculture of the University of Arkansas, Little Rock, AR
District: AR-2
Project Type: Planning & Design
Award Amount: \$249,966
Match Amount: \$73,258
Total Project Amount: \$323,224

The Building an Arkansas Agricultural Network Development (The BAAND) Project

The Building an Arkansas Agricultural Network Development (The BAAND) project builds on two decades of local and regional food systems value-chain work. The BAAND project will establish a statewide working group representing stakeholders currently supporting the local and regional food system across food producers, food systems practitioners, institutions of higher education, government agencies, industry partners, and community groups.

This project aims to: 1) establish an Arkansas network of stakeholders interested in growing the micro agriculture food system; 2) conduct a statewide needs assessment for outreach, training, and technical assistance to grow gardeners into producers; 3) apply the Precede-Proceed Theory of Change model to develop a strategic intervention to support gardeners to become community or commercial food producers; 4) design a foundational curriculum to teach the basics of food production on the individual, community, or market gardening scale; 5) design a model for delivering the curriculum building on other Extension education frameworks such as Master Gardener and Urban Agriculture programs; and 6) create an Arkansas Food Systems Council that can inform planning, outreach, training, technical assistance, resource utilization, industry connections, and policy for food systems. Many state efforts and federal funding opportunities to date have supported value-chain development after production, but Arkansas food systems practitioners recognize the need to build a foundational program to increase knowledge, skills, behaviors, culture, and connect to resources for micro-agriculture market model that includes anyone willing and able to become a food producer or grow their current skills.

Recipient: Winrock International, North Little Rock, AR
District: AR-2
Project Type: Planning & Design
Award Amount: \$250,000
Match Amount: \$77,500
Total Project Amount: \$327,500

Strengthening Midwest Agriculture Transitions Through Value Chain Coordination Peer Learning and Strategic Planning

Through this project, a group of Midwest partners – facilitated by the Wallace Center – will develop a shared strategy for advancing value chain coordination (VCC) to incentivize regenerative, equitable agriculture in the region. This planning and design grant has four objectives: interviewing relevant farming groups in the Midwest to understand their perceptions, interests and needs from VCC – particularly those supporting underserved farmers; leveraging the Wallace Center’s national value chain curriculum and training model to provide a workshop for Midwest participants on VCC fundamentals to build peer relationships and knowledge; developing a shared VCC strategy for Midwest agriculture. Wallace Center and partners will design and host an in-person strategy session to develop an actionable strategy for leveraging VCC to catalyze regenerative agriculture transitions; and focusing on promoting the strategy to regional and national audiences of decision-makers, funders, peer organizations, and networks – including the Wallace Center’s national VCC community of practice. Wallace and partners will identify and pursue opportunities to share the strategy developed in objective three such as conferences and other events.

California

Recipient: Community Partners, Los Angeles, CA
District: CA-34
Project Type: Farm to Institution
Award Amount: \$850,518
Match Amount: \$221,985
Total Project Amount: \$1,072,503

Good Food Purchasing: California

Recent policy advances in California have created a potential tipping point for the movement to use institutional purchasing of good food (food produced and procured in a way that promotes healthy and thriving communities, good jobs, local producers, environmental stewardship, and animal welfare) to achieve broad economic, health, environmental, and climate benefits.

To leverage this favorable policy landscape, project partners will establish *Good Food Purchasing: California*, a new regional collaborative to connect and amplify impacts of advanced good food purchasing initiatives in Los Angeles and the Bay Area. The collaborative will establish a multi-sector, public-private, regional partnership that will: 1) increase values-aligned food purchasing by institutions; 2) bring underserved producers/suppliers into institutional supply chains; 3) provide technical assistance to producers, suppliers, institutions, and local coalitions; 4) network local initiatives; and 5) use collected data to demonstrate regional impacts and advance good food purchasing policies/strategies.

The Collaborative will be convened by the Center for Good Food Purchasing with lead partners the Los Angeles Food Policy Council (LAFPC), San Francisco Bay Area Planning and Urban Research Association (SPUR), and Community Alliance with Family Farmers (CAFF), and will build on established partnerships with cross-sector leaders from each metropolitan region (including anchor institutions, community organizations, producers, suppliers, and policymakers), as well as key California government agencies.

Recipient: Emerald Cities Collaborative, Washington, D.C. (California Chapter)

District: DC – At-Large

Project Type: Planning & Design

Award Amount: \$250,000

Match Amount: \$62,500

Total Project Amount: \$312,500

Catalyzing A Local Food Processing Network in the Capitol Corridor

The vision of the Anchors in Resilient Communities (ARC) Regional Food System Initiative is an equitable and resilient regional food economy – to operationalize partnerships across the food value chain to meet growing institutional demand in the region. The two-year planning process, outlined in the proposal "Catalyzing A Local Food Processing Network in the Capitol Corridor", will create an implementation strategy to incorporate aggregation, value-added processing, and distribution into critical infrastructure components within Northern California, along the I-80 corridor, and coordinate food production and processing across the region to increase institutional market opportunities. The planning and design process will be successful with the completion of the following deliverables: 1) a comprehensive landscape assessment of existing food value chain infrastructure that can support increased value-added processing and meal production capacity along the I-80 corridor; 2) a gap and opportunities analysis of current, regional food system infrastructure to meet the increasing processing demand for locally- grown food products; 3) a business plan for the development of regional, value-added products, combining ingredients grown across the region, and a process for the establishment of cooperative ownership agreements among interested producers and processors; 4) a capital strategy which articulates funding needs across the value chain and prioritizes the development of BIPOC and minority-owned farms and processing businesses; and 5) continued partnership development with participating anchor institutions and BIPOC producers and processors throughout the 2-year planning process.

Colorado

Recipient: Trailhead Institute, Denver, CO

District: CO-1

Project Type: Planning & Design

Award Amount: \$250,000

Match Amount: \$92,363

Total Project Amount: \$342,363

Collaborating to Define Food System Infrastructure Needs in Jefferson County, Colorado

The Jefferson County Food Policy Council (JCFPC) is a community-based organization established in 2022 that facilitates collaboration and coordination to build an equitable and resilient local food system. With a network of over 280 individuals and organizations and a recently established Supply Chain and Infrastructure Coalition, JCFPC provides a platform for partnership and collaboration among diverse

stakeholders to build an equitable and resilient food chain. JCFPC's proposed planning and design project will continue to build and diversify the coalition, which currently includes community members, local government, local retail, farmers, food pantries, and philanthropic foundations. Coalition members will work together to lead the project with the support of JCFPC staff and resources. Coalition members will receive formal training on local supply chain coordination, principles of collaboration, cooperative models for shared infrastructure, community leadership, and racial equity. Together, the Coalition will use the skills gained from training to collaboratively create an asset and needs assessment, a geospatial resource database, and a feasibility study to increase understanding of the local food value chain and to test shared infrastructure solutions. The project will benefit all food system actors in Jefferson County, especially small farmers, local food retailers, food distributors including food pantries, and low food access communities. The feasibility of a collaborative solution will be tested, resulting in increased preparedness to seek investment for implementation of the solution. The established culture of collaboration will drive and build our local supply chain and food resiliency.

Maine

Recipient: Fork Food Lab, South Portland, ME

District: ME-1

Project Type: Implementation & Expansion

Award Amount: \$999,386

Match Amount: \$333,291

Total Project Amount: \$1,332,677

The Second Harvest Partnership: Adding Value to Upcycled and Surplus Produce

Portland Maine has achieved "Foodie" status as Boston magazine raved of the "Killer Food Scene" in a 2021 review. In comparison, Food Solutions New England recently reported regional institutions spend 3% of their budget on local foods. The 2017 USDA Farm to School Census reported that Maine schools purchased approximately 7% of their food budget locally, excluding the value of fluid milk. Meanwhile ReFED: Roadmap to 2030 estimates 30% or 10 million pounds of produce is relegated to food loss in the six-county Southern Maine region because there is no local processor that could transform these lower grade crops into value-added products.

The Second Harvest Partnership is a mid-scale value chain that includes institutional buyers, farmers, processors, logistics, and small, socially disadvantaged farms to open new markets for produce. With its move to a larger facility, Fork Food Lab, the state's leading commercial kitchen and food business incubator, will offer the solution that the current infrastructure has not been able to capitalize or incentivize. Through the Second Harvest Partnership, the region will establish the relationships, equipment, systems, protocols, and business model to capture upcycled and surplus product, add value to the fruits and vegetables, and sell intermediate inputs and finished goods to eager markets throughout southern Maine.

Minnesota

Recipient: Institute for Agriculture and Trade Policy, Minneapolis, MN

District: MN-5

Project Type: Planning & Design

Award Amount: \$111,694

Match Amount: \$40,000

Total Project Amount: \$151,694

MinneAg Network - Community Storytelling to Educate and Advocate: Growing Minnesota Farm and Food Democracy

Through this project, the Institute for Agriculture and Trade Policy (IATP) will convene diverse farm and food systems stakeholders from across Minnesota in the MinneAg Network. The goal of the MinneAg Network is to build relationships, coordinate a community input process to define the strategic priorities, collaborate with partners to develop needed civic engagement resources, and support communications capacity building to boost community storytelling. MinneAg Network aims to lift community members and highlight their solutions to nurture vibrant food systems that provide access to sufficient, safe, culturally appropriate, and nutritious food while developing local supply chains that allow small to mid-scale farmers access to markets. This project will strengthen relationships across organizations and deepen stakeholders' understanding of civic engagement. Easy to understand, multilingual, actionable resources can support a wider group of individuals in civic engagement and offer representation for emerging and small and mid-size farmers in Minnesota's decision-making spaces. IATP will use a participatory process to design the structure of a Minnesota Farm and Food Systems Civic Engagement 101 set of resources. The partners will then develop these materials with input from our member organizations. The funding will build on MinneAg's initial success, providing key communications support to highlight successes, provide educational resources and engagement opportunities, and work toward a food system that is more equitable and better reflects the needs of all of Minnesota's communities.

Oregon

Recipient: Friends of Family Farmers, Junction City, OR

District: OR-4

Project Type: Planning & Design

Award Amount: \$211,060

Match Amount: \$53,300

Total Project Amount: \$264,360

The Capital Assistance for Local Farmers (CALF) Oregon Project

The purpose of this Friends of Family Farmers (FoFF) Capital Assistance for Local Farmers (CALF) Oregon project is to bring together government grant makers, conventional lenders, and USDA resources with trusted, farmer-serving regionally and culturally specific nonprofits in their communities to create more opportunities for small, highly diversified, local market farmers. This project is aided by two sets of partners. The technical assistance (TA) partners are a group of trusted, farmer-serving nonprofit entities around the state who share FoFF's desire to better connect the farmers in their network to available resources, including the Friends of Family Farmers, Black Farm Bureau, Adelante Mujeres, Willamette

Farm and Food Coalition, High Desert Farm and Food Alliance, Coast Fork of the Willamette Watershed Council, Rogue Valley Food System Network, North Coast Food Web, Rogue Farm Corps, and Oregon Community Food System Network. The Funding Partners who make up state and federal agencies and conventional lending institutions, including the USDA Farm Service Agency, AgWest, USDA Natural Resources Conservation Service, Jackson Soil and Water Conservation District, and Oregon Department of Agriculture. The 15-member community of practice will meet quarterly to increase service provider knowledge, discuss barriers that keep more than 13,000 farmers served by the TA partners apprised of upcoming deadlines, and provide guidance on making applications competitive. The information from the community of practice will be supplemented with network research and consolidated into a Network Resource Inventory which will easily lay out existing programs and resources, providing direction for farmers and avoiding program duplication for service providers. This information, along with producer feedback through partner focus groups and a project-wide survey, will be used to deliver a report on the gaps and barriers experienced by current applicants and the groups' recommendations for future collaboration. The report will serve as a basis for designing new technical assistance to fill that need across Oregon.

Washington

Recipient: NorthEast Washington Educational Service District 101, Spokane, WA

District: WA-5

Project Type: Farm to Institution

Award Amount: \$998,073

Match Amount: \$274,754

Total Project Amount: \$1,272,827

Regional Farm to School Program Development in Washington State

Since 2019, small rural School Food Authorities (SFAs) across northeast Washington have engaged in building a robust Regional Farm to School (F2S) Program. This program involves a wide variety of community partners including SFAs, rural economic development corporations, food hubs, producers, processors, and state and local government agencies. The Regional Food Systems Partnership grant will allow these stakeholders to: 1) replicate Regional F2S Program models in four additional regions of Washington State, 2) continue to build up F2S activities in northeast Washington, and 3) work synergistically with other state nutrition programs to incorporate local foods into a larger network of school nutrition programming. Northeast Washington Educational Service District (NEWESD) 101 will work collaboratively with the Washington State Department of Agriculture (WSDA) to develop these new Regional F2S Programs and support local producers. To begin this process, NEWESD 101 will hire and train three Regional F2S Coordinators to work in four additional Educational Service Districts (ESDs) in central Washington (ESDs 105, 123, and 171) and southwest Washington (ESD 113). ESD partners will pair Regional F2S Coordinators with existing Team Nutrition mentors, who have been working for the past year to strengthen school nutrition programs in 22 small, rural SFAs across Washington State. These districts will now be able to enhance their school meal programs by partnering with community producers and processors to source more local food items. Regional F2S Coordinators will support the development of the regional farm to school model, bringing fresh local products to more school cafeterias.

Wisconsin

Recipient: REAP Food Group, Inc., Madison, WI

District: WI-2

Project Type: Planning & Design

Award Amount: \$247,845

Match Amount: \$62,500

Total Project Amount: \$310,345

South Central Wisconsin Food Systems Assessment and Partnership Project

There are long-standing inequities and vulnerabilities in the South-Central Wisconsin regional food system, a 13-county area with Madison and Dane County as the central marketing and logistical hub, referred to hereafter as the regional food system. Evidence for existing inequities and vulnerabilities is documented in data from numerous local and regional studies and reports. While these data sets provide important information, a more comprehensive, regional assessment is needed to capture additional supply chain gaps (anecdotally known, but not represented in the data), and to combine data from different food system sectors together. In 2020, the COVID-19 pandemic exacerbated many of the regional food system's gaps and weaknesses. Many sectors and food system entities were disrupted and had to innovate as quickly as possible. The pandemic amplified existing food system inequities as well. Community members hit hardest by pandemic supply chain disruptions included not only individuals experiencing food insecurity but particularly the region's producers/growers and small- and medium-sized food businesses. The pandemic has illuminated the lack of, and urgent need for, a comprehensive regional food system plan for the South-Central Wisconsin region. Building on this momentum with a comprehensive and inclusive regional food action plan will better protect our regional food system in the event of future emergencies. Utilizing the strengths of several food systems organizations and food councils, the partnership's primary goal is to build a network of diverse collaborators across the South-Central Wisconsin region who will co-create a community-driven regional engagement and assessment process that sets the stage for a regional food action plan.