

Fiscal Year 2024 Description of Funded Projects

Number of Grants Awarded: 10
Amount of Funds Awarded: \$5,224,700.22

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.

Alaska

Recipient: Alaska Food Policy Council, Homer, AK

District: AK-001

Project Type: Implementation & Expansion

Award Amount: \$385,216.55

Match Amount: \$100,000.00

Total Project Amount: \$485,216.55

Collaboration, Knowledge Co-creation, and Network Weaving: Building Alaska Food Systems with Mapping, Data, and Value Chain Coordination

The Alaska Food Policy Council (AFPC) has built a statewide, grassroots network of supporters, amplifiers, and diverse partnerships to address Alaska's food insecurity while supporting a resilient local food supply. AFPC engages in education at the city, state, and federal levels to create systemic change. AFPC hosts working groups and special focus working groups, on topics like Indigenous foods, food waste, food hubs, and more. These groups, which make up the Alaska Food System Network, include individuals and organizations from across the state, resulting in creative solutions and unique challenges that aim to address the food security needs of all Alaskans. Throughout our 2020-22 USDA RFSP Planning Grant, more than 350 Alaskans and 40+ organizations participated in developing a statewide Food Security Action Plan. From this work, along with our recent work in coauthoring both the Governor's Food Security & Independence 2022 Task Force Report and the Alaska Legislative Food Strategy Task Force Report, two pressing needs have emerged: a centralized repository of food systems data and assets mapping, and the establishment and facilitation of a multi-stakeholder value chain coordination council. Together with statewide partners, AFPC has identified clear pathways to successfully launch these projects. Through executing our RFSP work plan, it will leverage our collective expertise to turn these needs into reality and make significant differences to increase food security, while supporting resilient local and regional economies for all Alaskans.

California

Recipient: Local Area Revitalization Project, Susanville, CA

District: CA-003, ALL

Project Type: Planning & Design

Award Amount: \$205,303.50

Match Amount: \$70,823.00

Total Project Amount: \$276,126.50

EPIC Harvest: Building a Resilient Regional Food System in Remote Northeastern California

The Eastside Producers Informational Collaborative (EPIC) aims to unite stakeholders in Plumas, Sierra, Lassen, and Modoc counties to develop a resilient regional food system, enhancing market access for local producers and ensuring food security during crises. These four counties share similar characteristics: a remote and mountainous terrain, tight knit communities with an agricultural heritage, and economic hardship. EPIC will develop business plans for a regional network of aggregation and distribution that links this region to market opportunities, relieving prohibitive burdens on producers, and creating economic opportunities that provide food security, economic development, and environmental stewardship to the region. Three goals will be completed during the project period 1) establish plans for a Resilient Regional Food System: Forge strategic partnerships within and between four counties and engage in community outreach and feedback 2) Develop business plans that will enhance market access: Plan and develop a collaborative aggregation and distribution network in and between the four counties, and 3) Ensure food security during crises: Strategize emergency food access alongside the aggregation network to mitigate risks and ensure consistent access to nutritious food.

Georgia

Recipient: Southeast Regional Cooperative, Inc., East Point, GA

District: GA-005, ALL

Project Type: Planning & Design

Award Amount: \$250,000.00

Match Amount: \$135,000.00

Total Project Amount: \$385,000.00

Boundless Distribution Systems Development Partnership

The Boundless Distribution Systems Development Partnership will bring together the Southeast Regional Cooperative (SERC) and a diverse community of partners including Feeding America, Partner State Associations, Georgia Department of Agriculture, Georgia State University, and the Southeast Produce Council with a goal of increasing efficiencies throughout the supply chain that support the charitable food network. SERC will plan and develop strategies in critical areas including transportation management, middle supply chain logistics, value added processing and integrated data management, culminating in a project plan for a regional service center. For profit organizations and institutes of higher education will be engaged to conduct research, integrate diverse data platforms and operating systems, and optimize planning for sourcing and distribution. Partners will plan and design a regional service center offering freight supplier development and management, freight brokerage, weekend and evening support, and billing services, including programmatic grant administration. SERC will engage a wide range of community partners including growers, producers, partner organizations and our

neighbors to explore and analyze scope of work, location, value added processing, aggregation, distribution, and 3PL partnerships. Attention will be given to socially disadvantaged entities to create sustainable markets, while developing capacity to secure funding for long term stability. Twelve convenings will be conducted over two years. Two convenings will be for the partnership leaders, and ten will be held specifically for 1) freight and logistics, 2) middle supply chain, 3) engaged data/IT organizations, and 4) growers and other agricultural producers partnerships, and food banks and other engaged non-profit organizations.

Hawaii

Recipient: Hawaii Good Food Alliance, Kaneohe, HI

District: HI-ALL

Project Type: Implementation & Expansion

Award Amount: \$970,429.00

Match Amount: \$500,000.00

Total Project Amount: \$1,470,429.00

Creating Pathways to Careers in Hawaii's Growing Food Hubs

The Hawaii Good Food Alliance (HGFA) and the Hawaii Food Hub Hui (HFHH) are partnering to establish an innovative apprenticeship program that addresses the critical workforce needs of Hawaii's local food system. The program will provide paid on-the-job training, mentorship, and pathways to career advancement for new and existing food hub employees across the state. The partnership leverages the expertise and resources of HGFA, HFHH, and key collaborators, including educational institutions and local food system stakeholders. HFHH will lead the program's implementation, working closely with participating food hubs to recruit and support apprentices, develop training materials, and coordinate learning experiences. The project's primary goals are to: (1) Develop a skilled and diverse workforce for Hawaii's food hubs; (2) Enhance the capacity and resilience of local food enterprises; and (3) Strengthen the overall sustainability and equity of Hawaii's regional food system. To achieve these goals, the program will offer a combination of paid work experience, classroom instruction, mentorship, and professional development opportunities over a 12-months. Each participating food hub will receive funding to support the wages and training of 1-2 apprentices, with a target of engaging 14-28 apprentices statewide. By investing in human capital and creating career pathways, this project will enable food hubs to scale up their operations, meet the growing demand for local food by Hawaii's public institutions, and contribute to a more vibrant and inclusive local economy. The program also aims to serve as a replicable model for workforce development in other regions.

Maine

Recipient: GrowSmart Maine, Augusta, ME

District: ME-01, ME-02

Project Type: Planning & Design

Award Amount: \$152,952.00

Match Amount: \$95,600.00

Total Project Amount: \$248,552.00

The Downeast Food System Partnership

The Downeast Food System Partnership (DFSP) partners are all working within the overall vision of a broader diversity of Downeasters involved with growing and regularly accessing affordable, locally grown food, and where local farmers and others involved in the local food economy are making a sustainable living. The DFSP purpose is to provide a platform for developing joint goals and plans, conducting outreach to farming communities, coordinating with relevant actors within and outside the region, and accessing additional resources for implementation of priority actions. A shared understanding of the existing resources and assets, as well as the shared needs and aspirations of the Downeast Food System will inform the prioritization of joint actions for growing an expanded, innovative and more diverse regional food system. This includes increased processing capacity and market access for farmers and food producers – especially value-added opportunities. In addition, consensus will be reached among key stakeholders on a set of recommendations for a Downeast Food System Plan, with strategic and fundable project proposals developed that advance the vision of the collective Downeast Food System. The program’s beneficiaries include, but are not limited to, farmers, processors, distributors, and value-add producers; Distressed and food insecure communities, in particular in Washington County; Institutions that purchase food and organizations that serve vulnerable and food insecure populations; Restaurants, grocery stores, farmers’ markets and other sales points that have an interest in offering local food.

New Jersey

Recipient: Pinelands Preservation Alliance, Southampton, NJ

District: NJ-03, ALL

Project Type: Implementation & Expansion

Award Amount: \$946,505.00

Match Amount: \$239,258.00

Total Project Amount: \$1,185,763.00

Strategic Coalition and Capacity Building to Create New Opportunities for NJ Farmers with the South Jersey Farmers, Equity, and Sustainability Team (FEAST)

The South Jersey Farmers, Equity, and Sustainability Team (FEAST) project is designed to significantly increase the capacity and connectivity of regional food systems in Southern New Jersey. This project focuses on strengthening local food system infrastructure to improve food security and expand economic opportunities, particularly targeting underserved communities of producers and consumers. The project will establish 24 strategic partnerships that connect local producers directly with institutional consumers such as hospitals and schools. Of those, at least four partnerships will focus on engaging underserved organizations, and six will directly connect producers with institutional markets. A

critical output of this initiative is the development of eight new or improved distribution systems that are expected to increase efficiency, reduce costs, and expand customer reach. These systems are linked to the newly formed partnerships and will be supported by the creation of a comprehensive project website, serving as a central hub for information on local farms, farmers markets, information and stakeholder engagement. Additionally, FEAST will work to establish 20 partnerships between regional producers and various market access points, increasing production to meet rising demand, and facilitating more effective product transportation to markets. The project will provide training to 20 stakeholders to develop new strategies that improve food processing, distribution, aggregation, or storage. The project will establish a network of partnerships, the development of enhanced distribution systems directly benefiting local agricultural operations, and the generation of approximately \$900,000 in non-Federal financial resources through increased sales and grants.

Texas

Recipient: Central Texas Food Bank, Austin, TX

District: TX-35

Project Type: Planning & Design

Award Amount: \$249,975.00

Match Amount: \$309,223.00

Total Project Amount: \$559,198.00

Forming a Central Texas Regional Food System Council

This project is a partnership between Central Texas Food Bank (CTFB), Baylor University (BU), and the University of Texas at Austin (UT Austin), with support from local councils of government and local food access workgroups and coalitions. The goal is to form a Regional Food System Council that will facilitate regional food chain coordination, multi-sector partnerships, and mid-tier value chain development across Central Texas' 21 counties and Williamson Counties. The Central Texas Regional Food System Council will align and scale local efforts through a hub-and-spoke model, fostering collaboration and coordination among stakeholders across the food system value chain and developing public-private partnerships to prioritize and implement regional food system initiatives that improve marketing opportunities in the regional food system. Collaboration and coordination among the multi-sector members of the Central Texas Regional Food System Council enhances its ability to strengthen Central Texas' regional food economy by improving farm viability, preserving farmland, and bolstering local and regional food market outlets through value chain coordination. The first year of the project focuses on council formation and setting initial priorities. The second year focuses fully on setting priorities, conducting 1-2 feasibility studies and piloting strategies identified in the feasibility studies. A partnership between CTFB, BU, and UT Austin will scale current localized efforts to the regional context, facilitate the creation and co-design of food system planning toolkits to a Central Texas hub-and-spoke model and empower the council to integrate research, policy, and practice by connecting strategies through an integrated, multi-level approach.

Virginia

Recipient: Local Environmental Agriculture Project, Roanoke, VA

District: VA-006

Project Type: Implementation & Expansion

Award Amount: \$844,347.00

Match Amount: \$251,315.00

Total Project Amount: \$1,095,662.00

The Roanoke Foodshed Network: Strong Food and Farm Future

The Roanoke Foodshed Network (RFN) represents over 50 diverse nonprofit and community organizations, farmers, food businesses, community members, higher education institutions, and government agencies with the collective vision to build equitable and resilient food and farm systems in the Roanoke region of Southwest Virginia. Over the past four years, the RFN built high-trust relations with partners, created shared governance that prioritizes community relationships, and crafted a collective vision that is rooted in systems thinking. This foundation will serve as the bedrock for the Strong Food and Farm Future project which will continue to build awareness, support, resilience, and future investment in the Roanoke regional food system. The purpose of this project is to advance the RFN's 3-year Implementation Plan, including the following objectives 1) facilitate idea sharing, community relationships, trust, and co-creation among regional food systems partners for collective capacity building and regional food systems change; 2) build awareness of and support for regional food systems economies through collective marketing, storytelling and branding initiatives; 3) support regional farm viability through farmer network building, farmer educational programming, value chain coordination, and shared infrastructure; and 4) compile data across sectors of the food system to identify leverage points for systems-level change and help build the case for regional food system investment.

Washington

Recipient: Sustainable Connections, Bellingham, WA

District: WA-2, ALL

Project Type: Implementation & Expansion

Award Amount: \$969,999.87

Match Amount: \$242,500.00

Total Project Amount: \$1,219,999.87

Collaborative Growth – Building Shared Marketing and Communications Networks for Local Food Procurement and Promotion in Washington State

The Eat Local First Collaborative plans to unite over 25 diverse organizations to establish a comprehensive marketing and communication network that enhances local food procurement and promotion across Washington State. Leveraging the expertise of key partners Seattle Good Business Network, Tilth Alliance, and the WA Farm to School Network, this project will help transform Washington's food system, making it more equitable and just, especially for underserved producers and their communities. The project seeks to address the critical need for organized, collaborative marketing to support small farms, fisheries, and under-resourced communities, which often lack the capacity to independently create and sustain their marketing tools. Primary beneficiaries include small farms,

fisheries, under-resourced communities, state agencies, all scales of buyers including schools and institutions, and consumers. These stakeholders will benefit from improved market access, enhanced visibility, and strengthened regional food systems. Key partners and collaborators include nonprofits, government agencies, food hubs, and educational institutions such as Tilth Alliance, Seattle Good Business Network, Washington State University (WSU) Food Systems Program, and WSU Extension Regional Small Farm Programs. Partners operating statewide include the State of Washington Tourism, Washington State Department of Social and Human Services (DSHS), Washington State Department of Agriculture Farm to School Program, and Veteran Conservation Commission. These organizations will leverage their networks and expertise to engage with local producers and buyers. Regional partners, like WSU Extension programs in multiple counties, tourism agencies, and local agricultural guilds, will act as Regional Leads, ensuring authentic regional representation and support for underrepresented producers and businesses.

West Virginia

Recipient: West Virginia Food and Farm Coalition, Inc., Charleston, WV

District: WV-001, WV-002

Project Type: Planning & Design

Award Amount: \$249,972.30

Match Amount: \$70,841.62

Total Project Amount: \$320,813.92

Mountains to Metropolis: Connecting West Virginia Value-Added Products to Regional Markets

This project unites food and agriculture businesses, non-profits, charitable food organizations, and universities to address improved aggregation and distribution, a critical need for small-scale value-added producers in West Virginia. With increasing demand for West Virginia-made value-added products both statewide and regionally, a notable gap in mid-tier value-chain coordination has emerged. The goal is to enhance the economic viability and sustainability of these small-scale value-added businesses by forming strong partnerships and designing an efficient distribution network. This network will extend the reach and competitiveness of West Virginia's value-added products throughout the broader Mid-Atlantic region. The primary beneficiaries extend beyond the applicant organization to include small-scale value-added producers throughout West Virginia, enhancing their market access and economic opportunities. In Phase 1, partners will conduct an in-state comprehensive assessment of current aggregation networks, identify gaps and assets, and determine necessary technical and financial resources. This phase also includes planning efficient statewide distribution systems. In Phase 2, partners will establish new out-of-state partnerships. Project Objectives include identifying, building, and leveraging strategic partnerships and networks among value-added producers, distributors, and retail entities within West Virginia; planning distribution systems to efficiently handle, process, and transport shelf-stable value-added products across the state; expanding aggregation and distribution partnerships established in West Virginia to include broader partnerships across the Mid-Atlantic region; and planning for the aggregation and distribution of West Virginia made value-added products to markets in at least 5 Mid-Atlantic Cities.