



United States  
Department of  
Agriculture

Transportation and Marketing  
Regional Food System Partnerships Program

## Fiscal Year 2021 Description of Funded Projects

**Number of Grants Awarded:** 30  
**Amount of Funds Awarded:** \$14,809,185

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.

### Alaska

**Recipient:** Alaska Longline Fishermen's Association, Sitka, AK  
**Project Type:** Planning & Design  
**Award Amount:** \$189,100  
**Match Amount:** \$20,000  
**Total Project Amount:** \$209,100

#### *Feeding Change: Increasing Food Security and Workforce Development Opportunities in Alaska*

The impacts of Covid-19 highlighted long standing workforce development and food insecurity issues in Alaska. The seafood industry has long provided the backbone of coastal economies but relied on outside labor for processing, marketing, and shipping. Quarantine requirements led to significant labor shortages and high costs. In addition, currently less than 1 percent of the seafood caught in Alaska stays in Alaska to benefit the local economy. Alaska is one of the top five most food insecure states in the nation. 95% of the \$2 billion of food Alaskan's purchase is imported. 14% of Alaskans, including 20% of children, face food insecurity. In March 2020, the Alaska Longline Fishermen's Association and Catch Together formed a state-wide-coalition of non-profits, tribal organizations, military organizations, city and boroughs, foundations, fishermen, and seafood processors to address food insecurity and workforce development challenges. This initiative provided stipends and workforce support to the seafood industry and deployed \$2.5 million to purchase local seafood for distribution, providing 630,000+ free meals of Alaska seafood to individuals and families facing food insecurity.

The goal of the proposed 2-year project is to build on this successful pandemic initiative by designing and implementing a planning and assessment process to establish a 10-year, statewide, seafood distribution and workforce development plan that includes a sustainable non-federal financial strategy to serve Alaska's rural and historically marginalized communities.

## California

**Recipient:** The Regents of the University of California – College of Agriculture & Environmental Science, Davis, CA

**Project Type:** Implementation & Expansion

**Award Amount:** \$813,744

**Match Amount:** \$85,082

**Total Project Amount:** \$898,826

### *Creating High Value Market Opportunities for California's Small- and Mid-Scale Meat Producers*

Our July 2021 UC Davis Food Systems Lab (FSL) study derived from interviews with over 30 supply chain stakeholders, a literature review and consultation with the California Department of Food and Agriculture, revealed challenges and opportunities. The pandemic, drought, and fires intensify the already acute processing challenges linked to California's inspection system, insufficient producer collaboration and NIMBYism often associated with anti-meat sentiments. The study recommends how producers can improve processing access and market opportunities. This proposal builds from that study and seeks to facilitate development of effective collaboration among links in supply chains and to optimize processing, inspection and marketing systems that convey the value propositions of the small and mid-scale producers. The FSL team, its collaborator from the Niche Meat Processing Assistance Network, and our strategic advisors will work with two cohorts of producers, processors and buyers over three years in two regions to implement synergistic actions that will optimize processing and marketing of high value meat from small and mid-scale producers. Our primary goal is to create two new regional supply chains that highlight product attributes conveying quality and value. We aim to supply institutional systems such as UC Davis Health and sports venues with ground meat and restaurants and other retailers with the more expensive cuts. The work will ultimately result in more economic opportunity for producers and increased system resilience.

**Recipient:** San Diego Food System Alliance, San Diego, CA

**Project Type:** Implementation & Expansion

**Award Amount:** \$711,624

**Match Amount:** \$237,706

**Total Project Amount:** \$949,330

### *San Diego County Food Vision 2030 Implementation - Local Food Economy Lab*

The San Diego Food System Alliance (Alliance), is a diverse and inclusive multi-sector network that works across the region to promote collaboration, influence policy, and catalyze transformation in the food system. After a 2 year planning process engaging with over 250 cross-sector organizations and nearly 3,000 individuals—primarily low-income residents, tribal communities, food producers, businesses, and workers—the Alliance is launching San Diego County Food Vision 2030 in July 2021. Food Vision 2030, visualized through a report and a website including an indicator dashboard ([sdfoodvision2030.org](https://sdfoodvision2030.org)), outlines 10 objectives positioned to transform our regional food system to accomplish 3 goals: 1) cultivate racial justice, 2) fight climate change, and 3) build resilience.

To advance several Food Vision 2030 Objectives, the project goal is to launch a "Local Food Economy Lab" that centers equity and community ownership and works to improve the viability of local farms,

fisheries, and food businesses. The Lab will engage with a diverse set of public and private partners within the Food Vision 2030 network, including local farms, fisheries, food hubs, food businesses, institutions, mid-tier value chain businesses, technical assistance providers, government, philanthropic, financing, and economic development partners to coordinate customized business and technical assistance, mobilize funding, influence policy, and scale up local, equitable, and sustainable value chains. The Lab will also facilitate the economic case-making for investing in the regional food system. Through deep collaboration with partners, the project will involve two phases: 1) co-design the Lab and reimagine value chains, 2) implement the Lab services.

**Recipient:** San Francisco Planning and Urban Research Association, San Francisco, CA

**Project Type:** Planning & Design

**Award Amount:** \$163,133

**Match Amount:** \$63,407

**Total Project Amount:** \$226,540

### *San Francisco Bay Area Local Food Purchasing Collaborative*

The San Francisco Bay Area Local Food Purchasing Collaborative is a transformational collaboration that will leverage the power of institutional purchasing to build a more resilient, sustainable and equitable regional food system in the San Francisco Bay Area.

The Collaborative brings together all the stakeholders necessary to create this much-needed change. It includes: some of the largest public institutions in the region – school districts, hospital systems, corrections facilities – collectively serving 100,000+ people per day and spending more than \$40 million annually on food; communities spanning the geography of the region, including the three largest cities; local and regional food policy advocates working to align food purchasing with community values; City and County governments from across the region; and three leading organizations with expertise providing technical assistance to schools, hospitals and corrections institutions.

The Collaborative is built around the Good Food Purchasing Program, which provides the structure and tools needed to measure and track institutional food purchasing, determine aggregate demand for food aligned with community values, identify and break down barriers to local food procurement, and enable participation of local suppliers in institutional supply chains.

This planning and design project will result in a Bay Area Good Food Purchasing Roadmap and technical assistance toolkit, including a detailed implementation guide to support institutions in meeting local food purchasing targets. By identifying and addressing roadblocks to good food purchasing, the Collaborative will accelerate institutions' local food procurement and create a model for scaling local food purchasing in other regions.

## Colorado

**Recipient:** Northern Colorado Foodshed Project, Longmont, CO

**Project Type:** Planning & Design

**Award Amount:** \$249,262

**Match Amount:** \$58,857

**Total Project Amount:** \$308,119

### *Designing and Building an Equitable, Vibrant, and Resilient Local Food System in Northern Colorado*

This project brings together public, private, and nonprofit organizations, along with community members, producers, and resources, to design and build a more equitable, vibrant, and resilient local food system in Northern Colorado. Our goal for the project is to address three key areas of growth and opportunity: food sovereignty and access, community outreach and education, and production growth and land access. To achieve this goal, we will: (1) Convene authentic community collaborations with established and potential partners to envision, define, and design the local food system scope and structure. This includes developing data-informed planning processes and frameworks to build an equitable, vibrant, and resilient local food system that is inclusive of all people and addresses the three key areas of opportunity and growth; (2) Collect and analyze quantitative and qualitative data within the three key areas of opportunity and to create innovative, sustainable, and community-driven solutions toward a more equitable, vibrant, and resilient local food system. This includes conducting assessments and feasibility studies, as well as researching metrics to measure, evaluate, and document the partnership's work. We will also establish time-defined performance benchmarks for achieving partnership goals; and (3) Form and establish a local food equity advisory council to promote interconnectivity and inclusivity by prioritizing marginalized voices in the local food system, generating a dialogue between diverse stakeholders and community members, and building capacity for leaders in a more equitable framework.

## Connecticut

**Recipient:** Windham Regional Community Council, Inc., Willimantic, CT

**Project Type:** Planning & Design

**Award Amount:** \$249,715

**Match Amount:** \$75,292

**Total Project Amount:** \$325,007

### *Rooting Deep and Scaling Up: A Roadmap for Food System Equity and Viability in Eastern CT*

"Rooting Deep and Scaling Up: A Roadmap for Food System Equity and Viability in Eastern CT" is a partnership facilitated by the Windham Community Food Network, FRESH New London, the CT Food System Alliance, and Community Foundation of Eastern CT, that convenes producers, community members, stakeholders and allies to capture community-level food system innovation and momentum, particularly that catalyzed by COVID-19, and scale it up to strengthen regional food system resilience. Specifically, the partnership will explore and develop opportunities that integrate viability for small-scale producers in Eastern CT with equitable access to healthy food and food system decision-making for the diverse residents of the region, one-third of whom struggle to make ends meet, to the mutual benefit of both. The values-based partnership is structured around a cohort of Producer and Community Advocates, supported by a core of non-profit, philanthropic and university allies, and integrated with a

broader coalition of regional and statewide food system stakeholders and networks. Through this project, the partnership will: Capture current regional food system innovations, stakeholders, needs and opportunities, through a Landscape Assessment and Roadmap, and Community Survey Campaigns to identify marketing opportunities and community priorities; Explore, develop and fund projects and community campaigns around Roadmap “leverage points” that simultaneously expand markets for small-scale producers and support equitable food access; Sustain partners and the partnership, by facilitating connectivity, collaboration and capacity-building through communication tools, common goals, shared resources, and trainings; and Leverage findings through integration into the statewide policy agenda and Food Action Plan.

## Florida

**Recipient:** Southwest Florida Regional Planning Council, Fort Myers, FL

**Project Type:** Implementation & Expansion

**Award Amount:** \$643,500

**Match Amount:** \$108,926

**Total Project Amount:** \$752,426

### *SWFL Fresh: Choose Local, Choose Fresh*

In 2017, following Hurricane Irma, the Southwest Florida Regional Planning Council (SWFRPC) and the University of Florida Institute of Food and Agricultural Sciences (UF/IFAS) worked with small to mid-sized growers in Southwest Florida (SWFL) to identify negative impacts on their production capacity and how to make them more resilient. An Agricultural Sustainability Study funded by the Department of Economic Opportunity (DEO) resulted in an analysis that identified numerous threats and opportunities these growers face. The research confirmed consumers, producers, and retailers all find value in marketing a “local” brand for agricultural products. The Federal Economic Development Administration (EDA) then funded the development of a SWFL brand: “SWFL Fresh: Choose Local, Choose Fresh.”

Our project will implement the trademarked regional brand to showcase SWFL food producers and their products through multiple marketing platforms. The brand will support the development of new markets for farmers, increase public knowledge of healthy, local food sources, and connect food producers to consumers. Our marketing campaign will expand markets, increase farmer profitability, and promote the local economy in our six-county region while exposing consumers to higher quality and healthier food. This includes expanding access to farmers’ markets, farm stands, community supported agriculture, and farm-to-school initiatives. By supporting the creation of markets for locally produced foods with government subsidies and the adoption of tools that encourage healthy food choices among socially disadvantaged populations, we will improve food security for low-income individuals.

## Hawaii

**Recipient:** Hawaii Good Food Alliance, Honolulu, HI

**Project Type:** Implementation & Expansion

**Award Amount:** \$829,510  
**Match Amount:** \$211,914  
**Total Project Amount:** \$1,041,424

### *Hawaii Food Hub Hui: A Statewide Partnership for Supply Chain Integration*

The Hawaii Good Food Alliance (HGFA) and Hawaii Food Hub Hui (HFHH) will increase the success and collaboration of twelve food hubs across five Hawaiian Islands, thereby fostering a growth in local food enterprises and sales, while developing resources and sharing best practices to strengthen Hawaii's local food system and supply chain integration. Key partnerships include 12 Hawaii food hubs, the University of Hawaii College of Tropical Agriculture, Hawaii Investment Ready, City & County of Honolulu, Hawaii Department of Education's Child Nutrition Program, Hawaii Pacific Health system, other food systems stakeholders.

This project aims to increase food hubs' sales and profitability by:

- Increasing collaboration amongst food hubs, including assessment of individual hub market areas and development needs within the statewide landscape. PDs will share best practices, deliver technical assistance, provide coordination and leadership to the food hubs, and facilitate the development of a resource database for shared information and capacity building.
- Leveraging public-private partnerships to further food hub development to address the processing, storage, and transportation gaps in the food system supply chain through public-private partnership investments. This will include investing in equipment upgrades to meet expansion needs, advocating for institutional buying statewide, and identifying public and private sector funding sources to provide capital to food hubs.
- Growing the number of local farmers/producers benefiting from Hawaii food hubs by supporting the hubs with staff time for producer outreach and on-boarding, along with marketing funds to build the demand for local food in their regions.

## Idaho

**Recipient:** Valley Family Health Care, Payette, ID  
**Project Type:** Planning & Design  
**Award Amount:** \$203,590  
**Match Amount:** \$125,122  
**Total Project Amount:** \$328,712

### *Western Treasure Valley Food System Partnership*

This proposed 24-month Western Treasure Valley Food Systems Partnership planning and design project builds on a recent history of collaboration as well as regional food system assessments. This project will create the container for previously disparate or siloed public and private partners to come together and determine how to build capacity and develop a systems approach to support an integrated and health-based regional food economy. Focusing on Malheur County, Oregon and the Western Treasure Valley region that spans south eastern Oregon and western Idaho, the Partnership will develop a food hub and shared use kitchen feasibility study and business plan to increase regional capacity for processing, food distribution and storage, small to mid-scale value chain market development, coordination and delivery

of nutrition education, and food access solutions. The Partnership will facilitate cross-sectoral and peer-led planning sessions and workshops to develop an approach that is inclusive, providing a forum for participants and community to identify and prioritize strategies or collective impact actions.

## Indiana

**Recipient:** Northwest Indiana Food Council, Crown Point, CT

**Project Type:** Implementation & Expansion

**Award Amount:** \$998,298

**Match Amount:** \$240,150

**Total Project Amount:** \$1,238,448

### *Partners IN Food: Centering Collaboration, Resilience, and Equity for the Indiana Food System*

Partners IN Food formalizes longstanding partnerships from Indiana's public, private, and nonprofit sectors to create Hoosier Grown, a new statewide food/farm nonprofit organization with collective action metrics tied to the Indiana Food Charter. The proposed project builds on a previous USDA grant that established the Indiana Value Chain Network, an association of public, private, and nonprofit groups that researched and produced information on the roles, values, and impacts of value chain work in Indiana. Though direct, intermediated, and value-added sales have increased in Indiana, most recent data (USDA, 2017) indicate that, for each market channel, the majority of Indiana's sales dollars are captured by a small percentage of the farm businesses reporting sales. To address this disparity, Partners IN Food has two objectives: (1) Serve the needs of all farmers seeking local and regional sales channels for their diversified farm production and aggregation businesses and (2) Reflect the needs of communities and a diversity of farmers including those historically underrepresented. Rooted in equity and sustainability for all Indiana producers, businesses, and eaters, project activities support the fulfillment of those two goals. Through project activities and aligned partner events, Indiana communities will have the opportunity to contribute to the conversation around local food systems, community health, equity, and Trauma-Informed Learning Collaboratives. Proposed activities will bring state agency partners to the grassroots table to work together toward a more resilient, sustainable Indiana food and farming system where producers of color, female-identifying, and non-traditional farmers and food businesses can launch, grow, and thrive.

## Kansas

**Recipient:** KC Healthy Kids, Kansas City, KS

**Project Type:** Planning & Design

**Award Amount:** \$250,000

**Match Amount:** \$79,145

**Total Project Amount:** \$329,145

### *Envisioning A Collaborative Kansas City Food Shed*

The coalition will conduct the Envisioning A Collaborative Kansas City Food Shed initiative, led by key partners KC Healthy Kids (KCHK), Mid-America Regional Council (MARC), GroundWork, and New Growth, and informed by a diverse and inclusive array of collaborators and stakeholders, located throughout a geographically and demographically diverse food shed region comprised of eight (8) counties: Allen, Douglas, Wyandotte, Leavenworth in Kansas; and Cass, Jackson, Lafayette, and St. Clair in Missouri. By conducting a food access policy equity assessment and continuous, robust engagement of stakeholders at each level of the growth to consumption process, the Coalition expects to significantly strengthen the mid-tier value chain and form a strategy for policy change through measurable objectives and corresponding activities. The project objectives are as follows: 1. Convene impacted stakeholders to build connections, collaboration, and shared understanding of the current food system and establish a collective vision for a resilient, equitable food system. 2: Conduct an equity-based food system assessment to understand a) gaps and inequities in the regional food system for bi-state Kansas City, and b) assets and opportunities, including an inventory of food system organizations and their efforts, as well as associated impacts, gaps, or duplications. 3: Synthesize findings and collective vision into recommendations and action planning for building a cooperative, resilient, and equitable food system.

## Kentucky

**Recipient:** University of Kentucky Research Foundation, Lexington, KY

**Project Type:** Planning & Design

**Award Amount:** \$244,801

**Match Amount:** \$25,695

**Total Project Amount:** \$270,496

### *Growing Healthy Appalachia Partnership*

The Growing Healthy Appalachia Partnership (GHAP) cultivates regional food economies of Central Appalachia through public-private partnerships that combine institutional procurement, cooperative economic models, culinary confidence building, and value chain coordination for small and mid-sized farms. Through community-informed design and evaluation, our planning project sets the stage for future implementation across the Appalachian Regional Healthcare system and beyond.

GHAP combines the powers of a regional healthcare system (Appalachian Regional Healthcare) as both a major employer and mid-tier purchaser of food, the expertise of community-based food and agriculture organizations (Community Farm Alliance, Grow Appalachia), and the research strengths of a land grant and medical research Institution (University of Kentucky). We seek support from the RFSP program to grant us the time and resources necessary to identify how we can best leverage our respective strengths and resources to serve the communities of Central Appalachia and grow a regional food economy that fosters a culture of health.

Building on previous research, GHAP works to simultaneously 1) Expand markets for direct-to-consumer markets for local food in ways that directly address barriers for accessing and enjoying seasonal produce (time, money, knowledge, skill) and 2) Establish mid-tier markets for local foods by leveraging the



purchasing power and infrastructure of institutional dining. Through the formation of the GHAP and the support of this planning grant, our region will evolve from short-lived and disconnected efforts to support local foods to strategic and sustainable initiatives that foster a vibrant and healthy food system in Central Appalachia.

## Louisiana

**Recipient:** Greater New Orleans Development Foundation, New Orleans, LA

**Project Type:** Planning & Design

**Award Amount:** \$250,000

**Match Amount:** \$25,000

**Total Project Amount:** \$275,000

### *GNOFAB: Greater New Orleans Food & Beverage Entrepreneur Ecosystem*

New Orleans is synonymous with Food & Beverage and boasts world-renowned brands like Zatarains and Tabasco. Despite this reputation and success with regionally known brands like Blue Runner, the GNO F&B entrepreneurial ecosystem is difficult to navigate. To successfully launch and scale an F&B business/product, an entrepreneur needs significant funding, access to resources, and deep industry connections. While GNO's F&B start-up ecosystem is fairly robust, many companies are forced to leave the market to scale because the region 1) Lacks the necessary value chain production capabilities and capacity (i.e. pasteurization, cold storage, FDA warehouses); and 2) Lacks a critical mass of investors familiar with F&B.

GNOFAB seeks to build on GNO's F&B legacy and create a sustainable framework for entrepreneurial success by:

- Conducting a S.W.O.T. Analysis and Solutions Report of current F&B ecosystem
- Formulating Business Development, Retention, and Expansion strategies to foster growth, increase capital investment, and grow revenues of F&B businesses
- Providing Technical Assistance to both emerging F&B companies and to legacy F&B companies positioned for growth
- Expand the New Orleans Food & Beverage Industry Group.

## Massachusetts

**Recipient:** Berkshire Agricultural Ventures, Great Barrington, MA

**Project Type:** Implementation & Expansion

**Award Amount:** \$480,948

**Match Amount:** \$51,441

**Total Project Amount:** \$532,389

### *Strengthening Support for Local and Regional Livestock Processing in the Berkshire-Taconic Region*

Berkshire Agricultural Ventures (BAV) recognizes that the Berkshire-Taconic region, a three state, four county area in Massachusetts, New York, and Connecticut, is well-positioned to develop a formal collaboration of existing producers, agencies, and agricultural service providers to address long-standing food system issues in the livestock supply chain. BAV will serve as the project manager, leveraging existing relationships with livestock supply chain enterprises, economic development and planning agencies, and agricultural service providers to build capacity for partnership activities. Building on previous planning work, the proposed project will support the partnership in its continued development and implementation of a \$1.5M regional meat processing support fund and technical assistance program and a livestock working group to improve value chain coordination and identify next steps for shared infrastructure improvements and regional marketing opportunities. The outcomes for the proposed project will be improved processing, new supply chain infrastructure, and enhanced marketing opportunities for 3 meat processors and 20 livestock producers.

**Recipient:** Growing Places Garden Project, Inc., Leominster, MA

**Project Type:** Planning & Design

**Award Amount:** \$249,404

**Match Amount:** \$157,114

**Total Project Amount:** \$406,518

### *North Central Massachusetts Food System Partnership*

In its 27-town footprint, North Central Massachusetts (NCMA) hosts 250+ farms, with most identifying as small or medium in size. However, agriculture only comprises about 2% of the region's total employment, and residents are among the unhealthiest in the state.

Representing diverse sectors of the food system, the North Central MA Food System Partnership has been building momentum over two years to create a sustainable and resilient local food system. During its development, COVID-19 forced the region to move local food through new channels to keep the food system viable. This further increased awareness about NCMA's untapped potential and laid a solid foundation for the Partnership to build from.

Consequently, the North Central MA Food System Partnership is poised to create a vibrant local food economy and improve the health of residents. Over the next two years, they will conduct a comprehensive planning process to create a sustainable and resilient NCMA food value chain and business model.

Key activities that will help achieve Partnership goals include a Strategic Planning process via a Strengths, Opportunities, Aspirations, Results 'SOAR' analysis to formalize the partnership's vision, mission, values, goals, membership, and structure; a Feasibility Study to develop an operating and business plan for a regional Food Campus; development of a Resource Library with available funding, technical assistance, and evidence-based information to help grow the Food Campus; and the activation of a bi-directional Communication Network to connect diverse sectors within the NCMA food system.

## Maryland

**Recipient:** Eastern Shore Entrepreneurship Center, Easton, MD

**Project Type:** Planning & Design

**Award Amount:** \$104,956

**Match Amount:** \$34,985

**Total Project Amount:** \$139,941

### *Delmarva Farm to Freezer Program*

The Eastern Shore Entrepreneurship Center (ESEC) and the Chesapeake Culinary Center (CCC), two nonprofit organizations on Maryland's rural Eastern Shore, are partnering as leaders in adapting, initiating, and executing a regional Farm to Freezer value-chain coordination program. The partnership combines each organization's expertise in a more resilient/sustainable food system. ESEC is a leading provider of entrepreneurial technical assistance and programs that enable the commercialization of innovations/technologies in the agriculture sector. CCC is the region's guiding force in operating a community kitchen, processing local produce, and making pre-prepared meals available to populations with limited food access. The objectives of the program include: extending the rural region's growing season by preserving fresh fruits/vegetables using advanced IQF technology that retains the fresh-grade nutrition levels; increasing local market revenues for local rural farmers/growers to scale their production by providing a 12-month guaranteed purchase order for produce in pursuit of increased margins/profit; expanding access to local, nutritious food throughout the year for residents of Maryland's Eastern Shore by extending the accessible season to local produce through our advanced processing and distribution system; and setting an example for other regional parts of Maryland to improve their food systems by replicating/adapting their own Farm to Freezer programs. During this project period, the partnership will plan and develop an implementation strategy for establishing an appropriate-sized processing facility (include an IQF system), a storage and distribution system that will increase food access, an approach to control pricing and increase farmer margins, and a fully sustainable business going forward.

## Maine

**Recipient:** Gulf of Maine Research Institute, Portland, ME

**Project Type:** Implementation & Expansion

**Award Amount:** \$882,165

**Match Amount:** \$88,533

**Total Project Amount:** \$970,698

### *Strengthening and Building Resilience in a Regional Seafood System*

Our partnership shares the goal of achieving a resilient regional seafood system by building value and demand for seafood from New England. Regional seafood represents a great opportunity to provide a healthy, responsibly harvested, climate-friendly source of local protein for New England, as well as a decent livelihood for coastal communities, fishing families, and the seafood supply chain. This has only

become clearer in the wake of the pandemic, which served to amplify the challenges already faced by our region's seafood economy. Despite the healthy, abundant fisheries available in our region, regional fish is challenged to compete with inexpensive, imported seafood. There is a need to build and strengthen infrastructure to improve quality and value for the seafood industry, and to build awareness and demand through buyer education and connecting the often-disconnected participants in the regional seafood supply chain. Our partnership is comprised of organizations that have long histories of working individually and together to improve the business opportunities for fishermen and markets for regional seafood. We include two fishing associations, one nonprofit research institution, two lending and business assistance partners, a seafood offloading site and auction, and a mid-tier seafood value chain business.

We will also engage with other organizations and businesses through this project's convenings. We plan to work together to address the challenges of improving quality and consistency of product, to provide fishermen and processors with better information and access to capital to invest in innovation, and to build meaningful demand for regional seafood through buyer education.

**Recipient:** Harvesting Good, Yarmouth, ME

**Project Type:** Implementation & Expansion

**Award Amount:** \$792,966

**Match Amount:** \$198,255

**Total Project Amount:** \$991,221

### *Creating a Mid-tier New England based Value Chain to support Farmers, Processors, and Food to Insecure Populations*

Harvesting Good (HG), a Maine based public benefit corporation, and its partners including Good Shepherd Food Bank (GSFB), University of Maine Cooperative Extension, agricultural processors and farmers, Hannaford regional grocery chain and Sodexo an institutional food service corporation, present this RFSP application to support the development of a value added mid-tier, regional food chain to supply fresh processed vegetables throughout the six New England States. Under this proposal, HG will purchase local vegetables (broccoli) grown in Northern Maine from Circle B Farms (CBF), contract with food processors W.R. Allen (WRA) and Wyman's to floret, blanche, freeze, pack and store, and sell it initially through Hannaford's 132 store retail chain and to Sodexo's higher education clients. This application supports the implementation of New England's only regional vegetable processing operation to operate at scale. This grant will support HG's administrative costs, development of a marketing program, training and technical support for farmers and processors, and distribution of frozen vegetables throughout the foodbank network. This public/private partnership will generate over \$8.4M in new revenue to the agriculture sector, create 52 full and part time jobs, use underutilized processing facilities, establish a new market for Maine's vegetable growers, and extend the season for crop growth and processing. HG will invest over \$2.5M to purchase state of the art processing equipment, renovate processing facilities, and supplement technical support. This project opens the door for Maine's local vegetables to reach New England's regional markets year-round.

## Mississippi

**Recipient:** Mississippi Delta Council for Farm Workers Opportunities, Inc., Clarksdale, MS

**Project Type:** Implementation & Expansion

**Award Amount:** \$990,764

**Match Amount:** \$105,456

**Total Project Amount:** \$1,096,220

### *The Delta Food System Partnership*

The Delta Food System Partnership is our next step in the evolution of the northwest Mississippi regional food system, building on the organizing, recruitment, training, and capacity building efforts the partners have conducted during the last decade. Focusing on building an equitable, sustainable, and resilient regional trade network in the Delta region (from Memphis to Jackson), the Partnership will address the following needs:

- Local self-organization, to improve community self-awareness and cohesion
- Improved training and infrastructure, to grow volume while improving product integrity
- Helping producers, food businesses, and local communities think and work together by building and empowering relationships – and trust –throughout the food value chain.

The Partnership will meet these needs by:

- Investing in organizing and community development
- Expanding our existing communications and FarmQMS quality management tools and implementing an anchor farm program with the Partnership as a distribution intermediary
- Expanding the cooperative relationships we have built within the regional food supply chain.

Our work plan will proceed on three tracks: Community and Content, Scale and Integrity, and Market Facilitation. Led by the Mississippi Delta Council for Farm Workers Opportunities (MDC), which has a fifty-year history providing agricultural technical assistance, our team includes Up In Farms, University of Mississippi's Community First Research Center for Wellbeing and Creative Achievement, Chatham University's Center for Regional Agriculture, Food, and Transformation (CRAFT), DRA Resources, Southern Rural Black Woman's Initiative, and the Mississippi Department of Agriculture and Commerce.

## Montana

**Recipient:** Lake County Community Development Corporation, Ronan, MT

**Project Type:** Implementation & Expansion

**Award Amount:** \$999,184

**Match Amount:** \$280,363

**Total Project Amount:** \$1,279,547

*Scaling the Northwest Food Hub Network: Leveraging institutional demand to build strong, resilient, regional agri-food value chains*

In 2020, the Northwest Food Hub Network launched as a pilot program to support the 3 most established cooperative food hubs in selling regional, sustainable food to institutions across the Northwest. Partners in this pilot include Farm Fare, (provides software to share inventory, logistics, and marketing) Kitchen Sync Strategies (brokers shared sales), Mission West Community Development Partners' Cooperative Development Center (provides project coordination and administrative support) and Mission Mountain Food Enterprise Center, (provides value-added processing). This pilot effort has helped the food hubs begin growing their presence in the complicated but largely untapped institutional food market channel (in healthcare, higher education, and K-12 schools) across WA, ID, and MT. This proposed project builds on this pilot and develops the critical infrastructure of a growing regional food hub network and enhances its capacity, efficiency, and sustainability. NWFHN will support the 3 hubs and their 200+ farms to develop improved food safety protocols, develop strategic regional production plans, leverage a shared sales brokerage model to increase sales to regional institutions, and design and implement interoperability between the existing food hub software and Farm Fare's network technology to scale operations seamlessly. This project will result in integration between Farm Fare and Local Food Marketplace software platforms and a 160% increase in sales (~\$610,000) to regional institutions and will create a holistic evaluation of the Network's economic impact and operational model that will be shared with emergent regional food hub networks across the US.

## North Carolina

**Recipient:** North Carolina State University, Raleigh, NC

**Project Type:** Implementation & Expansion

**Award Amount:** \$993,825

**Match Amount:** \$234,891

**Total Project Amount:** \$1,228,716

### *Strengthening Food & Agriculture Value Chains in NC Through Farm to Child Care Collaborations*

Our goal is to develop, evaluate, and disseminate Farm to Early Care and Education (Farm to ECE) local food procurement models that increase market viability for producers. Farm to ECE is often framed as a win-win for farmers and children under five, increasing healthy food access. Since 2016, the Center for Environmental Farming Systems has partnered with county-based Partnerships for Children to convene a Farm to ECE Community of Practice that provides technical assistance to childcare centers to purchase local food and conduct experiential learning. However, our program evaluation and research indicate that there are challenges to making Farm to ECE a profitable market for producers and food businesses. The principal issues are that childcare facilities purchase low volumes of local food (due to small serving sizes and enrollment), and purchasing and delivery are decentralized. We propose extending our existing partnerships to explore models of local food procurement that aggregate demand to address these challenges. We will work in six geographically, racially, and ethnically diverse rural counties across North Carolina with high child food insecurity rates to pilot four innovative procurement strategies: (1) collaborative purchasing among childcare centers; (2) working with caterers that serve multiple centers; (3) collaborating with K-12 school districts; and (4) selling to the families of enrolled children. Successful strategies will promote regional collaboration, coordinate menu development, and address delivery

logistics. We use an inclusive, participatory approach to convene cross-sector teams in a community of practice to identify replicable Farm to ECE procurement models.

## New York

**Recipient:** Glynwood Center, Inc., Cold Spring, NY

**Project Type:** Planning & Design

**Award Amount:** \$120,290

**Match Amount:** \$31,234

**Total Project Amount:** \$151,524

*Hudson Valley Livestock Producer Network: Investigating collaborative solutions to improve the regional livestock system*

Given its proximity to New York City markets and agricultural land well suited to grass-based livestock production, New York's Hudson Valley has long been a region with promising potential to support growth in the livestock sector.

This project builds upon the collective experience of the Glynwood Center for Regional Food and Farming (Glynwood) and the Cornell University College of Agriculture and Life Sciences (Cornell) in serving the livestock industry. Glynwood and Cornell will partner to engage directly with the Hudson Valley Livestock Producer Group, formed in 2020 by Glynwood, to identify trade challenges and brainstorm strategies to address them.

With support from RFSP, Glynwood and the Cornell Cooperative Extension Livestock Program Work Team will form a Project Working Group, which will include representatives from the Hudson Valley Livestock Producers Group. The Project Working Group will design and facilitate a feasibility study to explore livestock sector:

- Production and capacity
- Human resource needs
- Sales opportunities
- Processing, storage and transportation
- Educational opportunities and needs

The Project Working Group will evaluate the data, write recommendations, and pursue funding to enable future implementation of projects detailed through the study. While this project is regional in scope, it is our hope that these efforts will be informative and catalytic to similar efforts elsewhere in the country.

## Oklahoma

**Recipient:** University of Oklahoma Health Science Center Board of Regents, Oklahoma City, OK

**Project Type:** Implementation & Expansion

**Award Amount:** \$945,779  
**Match Amount:** \$407,277  
**Total Project Amount:** \$1,353,056

### *Oklahoma Local Agriculture Collaborative*

The Oklahoma Local Agriculture Collaborative (OLAC) will be a cross-sector statewide partnership among universities, state agencies, non-profit organizations, farmers markets, and agricultural entrepreneurs. The overarching goal of OLAC is to strengthen and grow the capacity of Oklahoma’s local agriculture in three areas: improving communication and access to underutilized resources; developing technical support systems to foster innovative practices; and creating a statewide registration and membership network for producers and direct-to-consumer markets. OLAC will specifically focus on rural markets and underserved communities to ensure that all Oklahomans have equal access.

Needs assessments conducted in 2019 and 2021 with Oklahoma farmers market managers and producers indicated a significant need for education, resources, and opportunities for networking and promotion. By providing trainings and membership options, OLAC will address these needs and create a more resilient infrastructure for Oklahoma’s farmers markets, food hubs, cooperatives, and other direct-to-consumer markets and producers.

Through the Regional Food Systems Partnership Grant, OLAC will design a digital resource hub, provide virtual and in-person regional trainings, develop technical resources for business expansion, and create a membership platform for farmers and growers. OLAC will establish an Advisory Board— consisting of diverse members from across the state—that will guide the organization and ensure all grant goals are being addressed and met. Oklahoma has many individual efforts to improve the local food system; however, a collaborative, statewide effort with a collective vision and goals is necessary for the local food system to meet its full potential and better serve growing consumer demand.

## Oregon

**Recipient:** Oregon State University, Corvallis, OR  
**Project Type:** Planning & Design  
**Award Amount:** \$229,351  
**Match Amount:** \$64,971  
**Total Project Amount:** \$294,322

### *Embedding Oregon Food Sector Development in Racial Equity, Climate Change Resilience, Fair Labor Practices, and Strategic Collaboration*

The goal of this project is to create a set of action plans for regional food system development in Oregon that: (1) identify opportunities for shared infrastructure (physical and human capital), and (2) prioritize, in values and practices, racial equity, climate change resilience, and fair labor practices. Our partnership centers on an existing network of eight local food hubs who will collaboratively research, train, vision,



and plan. These hubs will focus on connecting local growers to local/regional markets and/or on incubating and making local/regional market connections for value-added food businesses.

Our long-term goal is a future where Oregon food hubs are successful because they:

- Share and practice a set of core values and principles that are fundamental to resilient and equitable regional food systems: racial equity, fair labor practices, and climate change resilience.
- Share costly but vital operational infrastructure, including physical assets like trucks and cold storage and human capital/systems like food safety expertise, marketing, and logistics.
- Source and market local food with unique attributes reflecting their individual regions.
- Aggregate food from their individual regions to sell collaboratively, under a shared brand or aligned set of brands, into larger urban markets in the Pacific Northwest.

The partnership includes the Oregon Food Hub Network, the Oregon Community Food Systems Network, the Oregon State University Center for Small Farms, Oregon Economic Development Districts, Oregon Department of Agriculture, and other partners who bring specific expertise.

## South Carolina

**Recipient:** Wholespire, Inc., Columbia, SC

**Project Type:** Implementation & Expansion

**Award Amount:** \$479,893

**Match Amount:** \$133,687

**Total Project Amount:** \$613,580

### *Growing Local South Carolina*

The Growing Local South Carolina project formalizes a cross-sector local food system network aspiring to cultivate a thriving, equitable, inclusive, resilient, and just food economy providing access to healthy food for all. An investment from the USDA will enable the network to 1) connect and cultivate South Carolina's local food economy, 2) develop a plan centered on addressing systemic inequities in the state's food system, 3) catalyze action to address farmland loss, 4) increase capacity of the local food system, and 5) refine metrics for measuring partnerships.

The project is managed by Wholespire, governed by the South Carolina Food Policy Council, executed and evaluated by contracted project managers, and supported by partners as follows: the SC Department of Agriculture providing financial, programmatic, and marketing support; USC School of Public Health providing administrative, stakeholder, and food council support; the Rural Resource Coalition as an organizer for gatherings, facilitating a farmland working group, and providing engagement to indigenous communities; Bonita Global providing outreach to African American communities; Alianza Latina of the Midlands providing outreach to Latina communities; SC Food Hub Network expanding mid-tier value chains; and SC State University Small Business Development Center and Carolina Farm Stewardship Association providing technical assistance to food and farming businesses. The activities of the network are guided by input gathered at annual meetings and through several stakeholder engagement mechanisms designed to elevate minority voices. The project prioritizes

strategies to fill food systems gaps, meet stakeholder needs, and facilitate market opportunities and food access solutions.

## Texas

**Recipient:** Padilla Farm LLC, Harlingen, TX

**Project Type:** Planning & Design

**Award Amount:** \$249,996

**Match Amount:** \$73,920

**Total Project Amount:** \$323,916

### *Equitable Access to Farm Animal Harvesting for South Texas Farmers and Ranchers*

Padilla Farm LLC, based in the Lower Rio Grande Valley of South Texas, shares a common problem with small farms with animals to harvest – there are no federally or state inspected harvesting services in the vicinity. We are located on the U.S.-Mexico border and travel over 400 miles (8 hours round trip) to a site in central Texas (Poth, Texas) to deliver our animals to the nearest slaughterhouse site. Due to a lack of other facilities, our animals are queued for processing at a later date. We then make an additional trip (another 8 hours of travel) to pick up our products.

This lack of access burdens small farmers and ranchers in South Texas, a region of 25 counties south of San Antonio. One large processor operates in Corpus Christi; however, it will only accept large volume animal processing. Our partners—small ranchers, farmers with a mix of agricultural products and animals, and small businesses that raise their own animals for harvesting—are left with one site option and an inequity that other livestock producers in Texas do not face. The situation creates a substantial disincentive to grow our production of quality animals such as grass-fed cattle for healthier choices for consumers and businesses that seek locally sourced meats.

We expect that solutions identified in the study may call for significant funding. A feasibility study will ensure that future public and/or private investments will be sound and motivate our fellow producers to continue supplying proteins for the food chain.

## Virginia

**Recipient:** Local Food Hub, Charlottesville, VA

**Project Type:** Planning & Design

**Award Amount:** \$249,666

**Match Amount:** \$94,233

**Total Project Amount:** \$343,899

### *Resilience and Opportunity Through Partnership: Eastern Food Hub Collaborative*

The Eastern Food Hub Collaborative (EFC) is a group of 15 food hubs and regional networks focused on increasing transactions among its members. This collaborative seeks to solve problems of supply and

seasonality of local food, increase efficiency and market opportunities, and promote transparency, all in the interest of supporting small farmers and local economies in the Eastern United States (from Southern Maine to South Carolina). Working together, hubs plan for and procure from other hubs specialty crops that are not yet or no longer in season in their own region. They take advantage of existing hub infrastructure such as centrally located warehouses and coordinate logistics to maximize efficiency, ensuring that trucks do not travel without product. They support each other in marketing, and they source food from one another to help with hunger alleviation and food access programs in their respective regions. This planning grant will help build the systems needed to support this network. Its goals are to a) understand gaps in regional food systems in the EFC footprint, b) accurately measure the progress made by food hubs over time, improve efficiency, and address weaknesses in data collection and in the supply chain, c) better coordinate supply and demand needs throughout the network, increase the number of transactions, and ensure that the network has resources needed to operate effectively, and d) increase food system resilience and mitigate future crises by having a system to track and quickly deploy local food resources.

**Recipient:** Virginia Foodshed Capital, Charlottesville, VA

**Project Type:** Planning & Design

**Award Amount:** \$250,000

**Match Amount:** \$47,000

**Total Project Amount:** \$297,000

### *Building Capacity and Collaboration to Develop a Regenerative Meat Value Chain in the Mid-Atlantic*

Regenerative grass-fed farming sequesters carbon, builds soil health, and provides a marketing opportunity for economic development, but is limited by processing capacity. Decentralizing meat processing strengthens resilience to food shortages as occurred with the Covid-19 pandemic. For viable investment in small-scale processing, animal production for local slaughter must increase, which means building capacity of farmers and growing the market for local grass-fed meat. The processing constraint is multi-faceted and requires a systemic solution along the value chain addressing supply and demand factors and access to capital focused on investment to increase small-volume processing serving the regional market, training meat cutters, capacity building in regenerative grass-fed farming, and marketing programs.

This planning grant solidifies a partnership that will develop a regional mid-tier grass-fed meat value chain in the implementation phase by establishing a regenerative meat certification and producer network; transitioning small/family farms to regenerative practices; facilitating investment in processing capacity; and linking to distribution and processing. This project builds on existing cooperation between partners, federal investment implemented by partners in a farmer capacity building network and grassfed marketing campaign, and existing market research and feasibility studies. Virginia's central location anchors the Mid-Atlantic grass-fed meat value chain. An established multi-use food enterprise center/value-added processor and a food hub distributor provide market access for increased meat production, as supply-side (production and slaughter) constraints are addressed.

## Wisconsin

**Recipient:** Cooperative Development Services, Inc., Madison, WI

**Project Type:** Planning & Design

**Award Amount:** \$120,000

**Match Amount:** \$30,000

**Total Project Amount:** \$150,000

### *A Cooperative Local Foods System for Chicago*

The natural foods co-op sector is the nation's farmer-friendliest retail sector, representing a value chain of products and a values chain of support for local economy, environment, and sustainability. Such a sector is rapidly emerging in the greater Chicago food shed. The intent of this project is to convene a systemic conversation among consumers, distributors, and producers to study, develop and implement a shared vision leveraging cooperation to simultaneously meet consumer preferences via economically competitive consumer-owned retail stores while creating a projected new producer marketing opportunity valued at \$3-4 million in farmgate income annually. Cooperative Development Services, supported by three other nonprofit business development organizations, will convene 15-20 new and existing grocery co-ops, philanthropic partners, at least one farmer-friendly cooperative distributor, and an association of specialty crop producers. The Applicant will be responsible for grant management, with support from an Advisory Committee of business development professionals and a project manager. All participating organizations will convene quarterly to create shared understanding and vision for a cooperative local foods production, distribution and marketing system serving the region. The work plan will be implemented in part through contracts for specific research/study activities; producer business expansion and capitalization support; and outreach presentations to extend the value of the project. Key outcomes include 1) Creation of shared vision and plan; 2) Feasibility assessment for a cooperative warehouse distribution location serving the project area; 3) Engagement with producers interested in serving this market, with support for business planning and capitalization by those producers; 4) Efficient project administration.

**Recipient:** FairShare CSA Coalition, Madison, WI

**Project Type:** Implementation & Expansion

**Award Amount:** \$873,721

**Match Amount:** \$219,231

**Total Project Amount:** \$1,092,952

### *Grower to Grower: Building a participatory vegetable farmer network across the Midwest*

As demand for organic produce remains strong and consumer interest in CSA and other direct markets continues to rise, farmers—especially those who have been historically underserved—need support in key areas in order to more fully participate in these markets, fortify their businesses, and build resiliency. However, many Midwestern producers are spread out geographically and often lack access to the community and critical support services they require locally. The Midwest Vegetable Grower Support Network aims to address these needs. A partnership that consists of TA and farmer partners and focused on supporting organic production practices, this Network will operate as a training and

community-building hub supporting diversified vegetable growers in 8 Midwestern states: WI, MN, IA, MO, IL, MI, OH, and IN. By leveraging partners' unique strengths, the Network will deliver language accessible training and education in priority areas, including technical assistance, business planning and marketing support for CSA and other direct markets, and assistance with navigating certification and endorsement processes—all while creating a peer-to-peer community that growers want and value.