



MEMORANDUM

To: Members of the Rappahannock-Rapidan Regional Commission
From: Patrick L. Mauney, Executive Director
Date: April 20, 2022
Subject: USDA Regional Food System Partnerships grant program

As you may recall, the Regional Commission adopted the Regional Farm and Food System Plan in 2015. Since that time, staff have convened the Rappahannock-Rapidan Food Council to guide implementation of the plan, successfully applied for and managed the USDA Farmers Market Promotion Program grant with local and regional partners, supported local food in schools via the creation of the Farm to School Liaison position, and continue to support efforts to foster development of commercial kitchen, food processing and food aggregation opportunities across the region.

The U.S. Department of Agriculture Ag Marketing Service (AMS) is currently soliciting applications to three grant programs, including the Regional Food System Partnerships (RFSP) program. Working with Food Council members and other regional stakeholders, staff has coordinated an application to the RFSP. A summary of the full request will be provided at next week's meeting.

As currently proposed, partnering organizations include:

- 4P Foods
- George Washington Carver Food Enterprise Center / Agricultural Research Center
- Mid-Atlantic Food Resilience & Access Coalition (MAFRAC)
- Minority & Veteran Farmers of the Virginia Piedmont
- Northern Virginia Food Rescue
- PATH Foundation
- Rappahannock-Rapidan Regional Commission

The Regional Commission would serve as grant administrator and would also seek funds to assess and expand the *Purely Piedmont* marketing program. The application would include \$12,000 in cash match from the Regional Commission for direct staff time on the project.

REQUESTED ACTION: Approve application to USDA Regional Food Systems Partnership Program



Transportation and Marketing



Grant Opportunities

Regional Food System Partnerships Program

The Regional Food System Partnerships (RFSP) Program is implemented under the Local Agriculture Market Program (LAMP), a program authorized by subtitle A of the Agricultural Marketing Act of 1946 (7 U.S.C. § 1627c), as amended. RFSP supports partnerships that connect public and private resources to plan and develop local or regional food systems. The program focuses on strengthening the viability and resilience of regional food economies through collaboration and coordination.

Historically, RFSP funds two types of project types: Planning and Design projects which support partnerships at the early stages of convening, envisioning, and planning; and Implementation and Expansion projects, which support partnerships building on prior or ongoing efforts within local and regional food systems. Through the American Rescue Plan Act of 2021 (ARP), RFSP received supplemental funds to expand farm to institution. This resulted in a third project type: Farm to Institution. These projects support public-private partnerships in planning and developing relationships between local and regional producers, processors, intermediaries, and institutions, such as schools, colleges, universities, hospitals, and local, tribal, and state governments, to increase local and regional foods in institutional cafeterias and meal programs.

Approximately \$40 million will be available to fund RFSP projects in FY 2022: \$5 million from the Farm Bill and \$35 million from ARP.

Important Dates:

Application Opens: March 1, 2022

Program Webinar: Wednesday, April 6, 2022, 1:00 p.m. EST;

<https://www.ams.usda.gov/services/grants/webinars>

Application Closes: May 16, 2022, 11:59 p.m. EST

Who Is Eligible?

Partnerships are eligible to apply to RFSP. A partnership is an agreement between one or more eligible entities and one or more eligible partners. Eligible entities include producers, farmer or rancher cooperatives, producer networks or associations, majority-controlled producer-based business venture, Community Supported Agriculture (CSA) networks and associations, food councils, local governments, nonprofit and public benefit corporations, economic development corporations, regional farmers' market authorities, and tribal governments. Eligible partners include state agencies or regional authorities, philanthropic corporations, private corporations, institutions of higher education, and commercial, federal, or Farm Credit System Lending Institutions.

An application may be submitted either by an eligible entity or an eligible partner on behalf of the partnership. The partnership must specify in its application which organization(s) in the partnership are responsible for receiving and managing the award.

What is the Maximum Grant Amount and Duration?

For Planning projects, applicants may request a minimum of \$100,000 and maximum of \$250,000.

Implementation and Farm to Institution projects may request a minimum of \$250,000 and maximum of \$1,000,000.

Is there a Cost Share or Match required?

RFSP requires matching funds from non-Federal sources in the form of cash in an amount equal to or greater than 25% of the total Federal portion of the grant.

What Can I Use the Funding For?

RFSP projects may fund Planning, Implementation, and Farm to Institution projects. Planning and Design activities may include but are not limited to convening established and potential partners, creating and conducting feasibility studies, implementation plans, and assessments, or conducting research on specific market mid-tier value chain, infrastructure investments, or policy analysis to prioritize next steps. Implementation and Expansion project activities may involve the development of value chains, institutionalization of processes for ongoing community and business engagement, and gap and resource analysis. Farm to Institution projects for RFSP can cover a variety of activities ranging from creating innovative value chains to institutionalizing processes for community and business engagement and identifying resources in support of farm to institution.

More Information

For the RFSP application and more information, visit: <https://www.ams.usda.gov/services/grants/rfsp>.

For questions about RFSP, please see the program's FAQs at:

<https://www.ams.usda.gov/sites/default/files/media/2022RFSPFAQs.pdf>.

Contact Us

For questions about RFSP after closely reviewing the RFA and FAQs, please email IPPGGrants@usda.gov.