



REQUEST FOR PROPOSALS:

Providing Healthy, Locally Sourced Emergency Meals To Food Insecure Communities In Suburban Cook County

To apply, please [complete this application form](#).
Questions? Email info@chicagofoodpolicy.com.

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Project Overview:

Cook County Department of Public Health, in partnership with the Cook County Good Food Task Force and the Chicago Food Policy Action Council, is expanding access to healthy, locally sourced emergency meals to food insecure communities in suburban Cook County by awarding micro-grants (up to \$25,000 per grant) to at least five suburban Cook County small/mid-sized farms, food businesses, food producers, or food cooperatives. Grant recipients will also receive free business planning support and technical assistance during the grant period duration. Local farms and food businesses/social enterprises that are owned/controlled and operated by Black, Indigenous, Latinx, and People of Color will be prioritized for this funding.

When are applications due?

Applications are due **July 15, 2022**, and funding decisions will be made by a subcommittee of the Cook County Good Food Task Force by the end of July 2022.

Information Sessions

Information sessions were held via Zoom on Wednesday, June 15th; please [watch the recording of the information session here](#).

When is the project period?

Projects will be carried out between August 2022 - May 2023.

What is the funding award?

Up to \$25,000 per grant, for at least five micro-grant recipients.

Who is eligible?

Any suburban Cook County-based business or organization is eligible for this micro-grant if they currently or plan to provide emergency food assistance to suburban Cook County residents. Projects will be prioritized that are providing emergency food to populations in communities that have been most impacted by the COVID-19 pandemic as identified by the



Cook County Department of Public Health: *Berwyn, Blue Island, Bridgeview, Burnham, Calumet City, Calumet Park, Chicago Heights, Chicago Ridge Cicero, Dixmoor, Dolton, East Hazel Crest, Ford Heights, Hanover Park, Harvey, Hodgkins, Justice, Lynwood, Markham, Maywood, Melrose Park, Merrionette Park, Northlake, Phoenix, Posen, Richton Park, Riverdale, Robbins, Sauk Village, South Chicago Heights, South Holland, Stone Park, Summit, Thornton, and University Park.*

Eligible businesses include:

- Farmers and food growers
- Caterers
- Restaurants
- Food service providers
- Social enterprises
- Non-profit meal providers
- Cooperatively-run food projects
- Mutual aid programs*

Businesses that are owned/controlled and operated by Black, Latinx, Indigenous, and People of Color will be prioritized for the funding.

*We welcome mutual aid projects to apply for the funding. However, we request that you partner with a fiscal sponsor/agent (e.g. non-profit organization).

What kinds of activities can be included in the project?

The microgrants can be used to **support staff time** in the preparation and distribution of healthy emergency meals that utilize locally sourced foods. Emergency meals can include community-supported agriculture (CSA) shares, VeggieRX programs, grocery bags with fresh produce, and prepared meals including breakfast, lunch, or dinner, etc. Additional costs, such as travel and supplies, are allowable as part of the grant budget.



Emergency meal delivery models can include partnerships with existing food pantries/food banks, mutual aid networks, faith-based organizations, healthcare organizations, community-based organizations, home delivery programs, etc. If food businesses do not have an existing community partnership for distribution of emergency meals, CCDPH and CFPAC will support this connection to community partners.

We will strongly encourage microgrant applicants to include nutrition education components in their proposed project in addition to emergency meal distribution. If needed, food businesses/organizations will be connected to nutrition education resources to share with emergency meal recipients, or they can utilize their own nutrition education resources.

The microgrant can cover staff time involved in:

- Preparing and distributing emergency meals
- Participating in technical assistance sessions with business support organizations
- Building relationships with others in the local food supply chain (ie local farms, processors, distributors, food preparers, institutions)
- Scaling up emergency meal distribution operations through business planning
- Developing and updating culturally appropriate nutrition educational materials
- Providing nutrition/meal prep education to meal recipients

Please note: this microgrant cannot be used for capital improvements or directly on food purchases.

What technical assistance will be provided?

Microgrant recipients will be connected to a local business-support organization for free business planning consultation. Each microgrant recipient will be required to attend at least three group meetings and participate in at least 5 hours of 1:1 support over the duration of the grant. Recipients will be able to learn about financial tools, access to loans and capital, and business decision-making models that will support the resiliency and sustainability of their operations. The technical assistance may include staff training, networking support, and navigating food-related local, state, and federal regulations. Business support organizations will



also provide information for businesses on how to sell food to community institutions in connection with Cook County's Good Food Purchasing Program implementation. Assistance will also be provided to grant recipients on how to further align their food purchasing with the GFPP Good Food Purchasing Standards.

What are the anticipated outcomes?

Each awarded food business will have a deliverable of distributing **at least 2,000 healthy emergency meals** to suburban Cook County communities impacted by COVID-19. We expect to award at least 5 suburban Cook County small/mid-sized food businesses, food producers, food cooperatives, etc. and anticipate at least 10,000 total emergency meals will be distributed in suburban Cook County during this project period.

What data will need to be tracked?

Microgrant recipients will need to provide monthly reporting data about the project to the Chicago Food Policy Action Council (CFPAC). Reports will include the following information for the specified reporting period:

- # & frequency of healthy emergency meals delivered
- Type(s) of emergency meals delivered (e.g CSA box, VeggieRx bag, prepared meal, etc.)
- Types of food items included in delivery (e.g sample menus, grocery bag product lists, etc.)
- Demographics of emergency meal recipients
- Geographic location(s) of food distribution
- # of nutrition education session(s) conducted for meal recipients, and # of participants

CFPAC will support microgrant recipients with templates and tools to help them track this data for the project.

Why does this project matter?

Food insecurity was prevalent in Cook County before COVID-19, but the pandemic has exacerbated this issue in our communities. Over 760,000 Cook County residents are currently food insecure, meaning they lack access, at times, to enough food for an active, healthy lifestyle.



More than 30% of this need is found in the Cook County suburbs.¹ Food insecurity is linked with health and mental health, as well as educational outcomes. Black and Hispanic older adults have disproportionately experienced higher levels of food insecurity during COVID-19. For older adults, the consequences of hunger can be much more severe because of the impact of nutrition on diet-related disease and health management. Recent research also suggests that food-insecure people were significantly more likely to be hospitalized with COVID-19 than the food secure group that was studied.²

Moreover, Cook County Government recognizes that community economic stability is critical to food security, which is one of the main reasons why the Cook County Board of Commissioners approved the [Good Food Purchasing Program \(GFPP\)](#) as a resolution in 2018. GFPP supports Cook County's public food programs with shifting their food purchases toward local, sustainable, healthy, fair, and humane products that build racial equity, transparency, and accountability throughout the food system. Not only does this micro-grant provide food to those in need, but the funding is intended to invest in local farms and food businesses who are serving their communities. This microgrant opportunity aims to support more resilient food businesses that are strengthening the local economy and working toward closing the racial wealth gap.

Ready to apply?

To apply, please [complete this application form](#). Questions? Email info@chicagofoodpolicy.com.

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¹ Gundersen, C., A. Satoh, A. Dewey, M. Kato & E. Engelhard. Map the Meal Gap 2015: Food Insecurity and Child Food Insecurity Estimates at the County Level. Feeding America, 2015.

² Ariya, M., Karimi, J., Abolghasemi, S. et al. Food insecurity arises the likelihood of hospitalization in patients with COVID-19. Sci Rep 11, 20072 (2021). <https://doi.org/10.1038/s41598-021-99610-4>



Frequently Asked Questions

1. What is the benefit to my business or organization in applying to this funding?

- Funding for staff time to prepare community meals
- Technical assistance to your organization for business planning
- Connections to community partners
- Support with food & nutrition educational materials
- Promotion of your business/organization via Cook County and Chicago Food Policy Action Council's social media and newsletters

2. I am part of a mutual aid project that doesn't have formal non-profit status. Can I apply for this funding?

- We welcome mutual aid projects to apply for the funding. However, we request that you partner with a fiscal sponsor/agent (e.g. non-profit organization).

3. My business/organization serves suburban Cook County, but we are not located in suburban Cook County ourselves. Are we still eligible to apply?

While businesses and organizations that are based in suburban Cook County will be prioritized for funding, you are still encouraged to apply for this grant even if your business/organization is located outside of suburban Cook County, like the City of Chicago or a neighboring county. However, projects *must serve suburban Cook County communities with emergency food* to be eligible for this microgrant.

4. My business/organization is looking for funding beyond staff time and basic supplies (for things like food purchases, equipment, and infrastructure) and/or I don't serve any of the priority areas listed in the RFP. Are there other grant opportunities that I should look into?



While this grant's funding source only allows the grant money to be allocated toward staff time, there are other upcoming opportunities that we recommend exploring for further funding.

- [Advocates for Urban Agriculture Funding Opportunities List](#): Please check out AUA's list of funding opportunities for local farmers for potential grants that may support your project.
- [Chicago Regional Food Systems Fund](#): The Chicago Region Food System Fund addresses hunger and business disruption by bolstering the region's communities and local food system in response to COVID-19 and other systemic shocks.
- [USDA Local Agriculture Marketing Program](#): Farms and food businesses may be eligible to apply for federal funding to support their efforts. Learn more about the USDA's funding here.
- Chicago Food Equity Fund (coming soon): The City of Chicago will be launching a Food Equity Fund for local farms and food businesses within the next year. [Join the GFPI newsletter to stay informed of updates.](#)
- The Metro Chicago Good Food Purchasing Initiative Community Fund (coming soon): The Chicago Food Policy Action Council will be launching a Community Fund to support local farms and food businesses with their readiness to sell to wholesale and institutional supply chains. [Join the GFPI newsletter to stay informed of updates.](#)

5. What if my business/organization can only commit to fewer than 2,000 meals provided?

We still highly encourage you to apply for this microgrant. However, the committee may not be able to award your business/organization the full grant amount.

6. What is the Cook County Good Food Purchasing Policy and how is this grant opportunity connected?



In 2018, the Cook County Board of Commissioners [approved a resolution](#) recommending that Cook County’s departments and agencies implement the [Good Food Purchasing Program \(GFPP\)](#). The policy shifts the County’s food purchasing toward a more racially equitable, transparent, and accountable food system that promotes access to local, healthy, fair, humane, and sustainably produced food in public meal program environments. To guide GFPP efforts, the Cook County Department of Public Health has partnered with the Chicago Food Policy Action Council in organizing a Cook County Good Food Task Force, composed of food-procuring departments and agencies, community partners and other Cook County departments and agencies that play supportive roles in GFPP implementation.

The Cook County Good Food Task Force has identified the need for investment in Cook County-based farms and food businesses, particularly those owned and operated by Black, Indigenous, Latinx, and People of Color, in order for Cook County’s institutions, like Cook County Health, Cook County Jails, and Cook County Juvenile Temporary Detention Center, to be able to source their food products locally and equitably. This microgrant opportunity is intended to provide support to community-driven farms and food businesses to not only serve their communities in the short-term, but provide them with technical assistance that will support their resilience and growth in the long-term.

7. Where can I receive help with my application? I don’t have a lot of grant writing experience.

Please reach out to Kathryn Pereira, University of IL-Extension Local Food & Small Farms Educator, to schedule 1:1 assistance for your grant application: kpereira@illinois.edu. Requests received by July 10th, 2022, will be prioritized.