

MISSISSIPPI HEALTHY FOOD AND FAMILIES PROGRAM

REQUEST FOR GRANT PROPOSALS, FY '23

AUTHORITY: S. B. No. 2077, Mississippi Regular Session, 2022

The Mississippi Department of Agriculture and Commerce is requesting proposals from qualified Mississippi nonprofits to be funded under the Mississippi Healthy Food and Families Program for the following purposes: to increase the purchasing power of Mississippi residents with limited access to fresh fruits and vegetables, to support farmers, and to invest in Mississippi's economy by providing matching dollar incentives for Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program (SNAP) benefits redeemed at farmers' markets and retailers.

1. The Grant Proposal:

- a. Shall include a Work Plan for no more than two years to double purchases made with Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program (SNAP) benefits by Mississippi residents at participating farmers' markets and certain retail locations throughout the state and how that goal will be reached. (**See section 12**)
- b. Shall include a budget, list of farmers markets/retailers (if available), and the proposal should set forth how the grant will be distributed or utilized.
- c. Shall be no more than 10 pages (8 ½ by 11, 11-point type, double spaced) in length with a detailed Scope of Work along with any supporting documentation, current or past experience, including any letters of support.

2. Limitation on the use of Grant funds:

- a. The Grantee (successful applicant) shall expend the granted amount directly for participating Mississippi farmers' markets and retail locations for matching dollars for purchases made with SNAP benefits.
- b. Guidelines and eligibility for the Mississippi Healthy Food and Families Program shall be established by the Mississippi Department of Agriculture and Commerce and shall be consistent with the U.S. Agriculture Improvement Act of 2018.

3. Definitions:

For the purposes of this program:

- a. "Eligible fruits and vegetables" means any fresh or frozen, whole or cut fruits and vegetables that do not contain added sugar, fat, oil or salt.
- b. "Eligible retailers" means a small business whose principal office is located in Mississippi and that has demonstrated a commitment to procuring Mississippi-grown foods, including fruits and vegetables.

4. Qualifications — Eligible Applicants:

To qualify to receive a grant under this program, the qualified nonprofit organization, to MDAC's satisfaction, must have a project design where the incentives are earned when purchasing fruits or vegetables using SNAP benefits at participating Mississippi farmers' markets and retailers. Therefore, the program should create or sustain successful healthy food incentive programs that connect federal food benefit recipients with local farmers, farmers markets or healthy food outlets.

In addition, in awarding a grant, MDAC may also consider whether the nonprofit organization has a demonstrated record of providing services in food deserts. In its proposal, the applicant must furnish proof that it is a qualifying organization.

The designated nonprofit organizations shall have a demonstrated track record of:

- a. Building a statewide network;
 - b. Implementing such funds for distribution and reporting processes;
 - c. Providing training and technical assistance to farmers' markets, produce stands, and direct producer-to-consumer venues;
 - d. Conducting community outreach and data collection;
- And
- e. Providing documentation for full accounting and administration of funds distributed to farmers markets and retailers.

Applicants must have ability to educate current and new SNAP recipients regarding access, nutrition, etc.

Eligible non-profit applicants applying to match existing federal grant funds (for example the Gus Schumacher Nutrition Incentive Program (GusNIP)), or applying to utilize the grant for matching funds for the GusNIP or similar SNAP incentive grant programs are preferred. Projects should align with and advance the Gus Schumacher Nutrition Incentive Program (GusNIP) priorities, which are to:

- a. Maximize the share of funds used for direct incentives to participants;
- b. Include coordination with multiple stakeholders, such as farm organizations, nutrition education programs, cooperative extension services, public health departments, health providers, private and public health insurance agencies, cooperative grocers, grocery associations, and community-based and non-governmental organizations;
- c. Use direct-to-consumer sales marketing; (*Promotion of program participation to SNAP participants*);
- d. Test innovative or promising strategies that would contribute to our understanding of how best to increase the purchase of fruits and vegetables by SNAP participants, to inform future efforts;

- e. Involve a diversity of types of firms (e.g., convenience stores, supermarkets, farmers' markets, etc.);
- f. Demonstrate a track record of designing and implementing successful nutrition incentive programs that connect low-income consumers and agricultural producers;
- g. Provide locally or regionally produced fresh fruits and vegetables, especially those culturally appropriate for the target audience;
- h. Have demonstrated the ability to provide services to underserved communities; and/or economically distressed communities, particularly Opportunity Zones;
- i. Offer supplemental services in high-need communities, including online ordering, transportation between home and store, and delivery services; and
- j. Include food retailers (firms) that are open (1) for extended hours and (2) most or all days of the year.

5. Invoice and Reporting Requirements:

The Grantee (successful applicant) shall submit to MDAC on a quarterly basis (a) the names and locations of farmers' markets or retail locations that received or benefited from funds under this program; and (b) the amount of SNAP transactions carried out at participating farmers' markets and retail locations. If the funds necessary for program operations budgeted for the following quarter are expended before the quarter ends; grant funds will be made available.

The Grantee (successful applicant) shall submit an annual report at the end of each fiscal year to MDAC of: (a) the names and locations of farmers' markets and retail locations that benefited from funds under this program; (b) the dollar amount of funds benefited by each; and (c) the dollar amount of SNAP benefits used at each market retail locations participating, as well as any unspent total matching funds. Additionally, the report shall include a summary of expenses outlining the number of producer constituents impacted, number of participants (markets, stands, CSAs, and stores) involved, the amount of SNAP transactions carried out at participating farmers' markets and retailers, and an assessment of the program's effectiveness in increasing consumption of fresh, local fruits and vegetables by SNAP as determined by participant surveys.

6. **Estimated Total Program Funding Available for this funding cycle:** \$360,000
7. **Award Ceiling:** \$360,000
8. **Award Floor:** \$100,000
9. **Opportunity category:** Competitive Grant
10. **Other Funds/Cost Share or Matching Requirements:** No matching funds are required to receive Healthy Food and Families grant funds. If the applicant is applying to match existing federal grant funds (for example the Gus Schumacher Nutrition Incentive Program (GusNIP)), will be applying for the GusNIP program and will utilize the grant for matching funds; or has received past federal nutrition incentive grant funds, it should be stated in the proposal, including the name of the federal grant, the amount of funds previously awarded or grant funds applicant will be applying.
11. **Selection Criteria:** Eligible applications that are received prior to the deadline will be evaluated on a competitive basis. MDAC will review, rank, and make funding recommendations based upon the above criteria, including the criteria specified in SB 2077, Mississippi Regular Session, 2022.
12. **Timeline:**

Date of Posting of RGP: TBD

Deadline for Application Submission: January 31, 2023; 5:00PM CST.

Notifications of Funding Decisions: within 30 days of application deadline

Deadline for the availability of funds and funds to be expended: June 30, 2025.

(MDAC will award grant funds by June 2023 and the awardee will have until June 30, 2025, to expend all funds).

Grant applications must be submitted or stamped by (date January 31, 2023) and sent electronically to purvie@mdac.ms.gov or by mail to: Purvie Green, P.O. Box 1609, Jackson, MS. 39215. Call 601-359-1168 with questions.