

Virginia Food Access Investment Fund



VFAIF Overview

What is VFAIF?

- Created by the General Assembly in 2020
- Statewide program focused on equity and justice in local food systems by investing in new or expanding food retailers that address food access issues
- Funds are to be used for business development, construction, rehabilitation, equipment upgrades and expansion of grocery stores, small food retailers, and innovative food retail projects in historically marginalized communities



Equitable Food Oriented Development (EFOD)

- A development strategy that uses food and agriculture to create economic opportunities and healthy neighborhoods and that explicitly seeks to build community assets, pride, and power by and with historically marginalized communities



Equitable Food Oriented Development (EFOD)

What does EFOD look like?

- Community-led decision making and ownership of solution
- Businesses are supported to stay in the community over time
- Community economic security is developed
- Community culture is maintained and promoted

What doesn't EFOD look like?

- Nutrition- or health-focused food access
- Charity model, with little personal agency
- No long-term community assets built
- Outside-owned development or project



Example Projects

What does EFOD look like?

- Convenience store adding refrigeration and freezer capacity to store fresh produce and add SNAP/Fresh Match
- Market adding mobile component
- Café expanding to include fresh products in addition to pre-prepared foods

What doesn't EFOD look like?

- Food pantries
- School meal programs
- Community food donation boxes
- Purchase of land



VFAIF Purpose

- Improve access to fresh foods and reduce food deserts across the Commonwealth;
- Create wealth and leadership in historically marginalized communities;
- Improve access to private capital for historically marginalized communities, including Black, Indigenous, and People of Color (BIPOC) business owners;
- Assess, support, and transform existing or potential businesses into sustainable community-owned businesses;
- Foster innovative solutions that uplift and share successful food business models; and
- Reduce food insecurity, strengthen food systems, and improve health outcomes for historically marginalized communities.

VFAIF – The Details

- \$1.25m in available funding over 2 years
- A portion of funding will go to a Program Coordinator and administrative costs for a CDFI
- \$400,000 available for FY 2021 and FY 2022 grant rounds



VFAIF – FY 2021 Grant Round

- Individual award amounts will range from \$5,000 - \$50,000
- No match requirement
- Reimbursable grant
- Up to 25% of the funds may be awarded upfront



VFAIF Eligibility

Applicants may be individuals, farms, nonprofits, organizations (including faith-based), or for-profit businesses

- Grocery stores
- Innovative food retail projects, such as mobile markets
- Small food retailers, such as convenience stores or farmers markets
- Small, limited resource or socially disadvantaged farmers
- Co-ops, community gardens, restaurants or cafes, provided there is a retail partner



VFAIF – Criteria

- 2 types of criteria:
 - Mandatory = must meet
 - Additional = encouraged to meet
- Applicants do not need to meet all of the criteria at the time of application
- Must include a plan and timeline for meeting mandatory criteria
- VDACS can offer technical assistance



VFAIF – Mandatory Criteria

Projects must meet the following criteria:

- Have a retail component
- Accept SNAP benefits and offer Virginia Fresh Match incentives
- Purchase 25% of fresh products from Virginia's small, beginning, limited resource, Veteran, and/or socially disadvantaged farmers
- Directly serve residents within underserved, low food access communities
- Demonstrate a history of community engagement



VFAIF – Additional Criteria

Projects are encouraged to meet the following criteria:

- Owned or substantially led by/working in active partnership with individuals from historically marginalized and vulnerable communities
- Provide customer access – bring the customer to the market or the market to the customer
- Integrate community culture and artistic expression in the business model



VFAIF – Additional Criteria

Projects are encouraged to meet the following criteria:

- Develop new markets and enterprises, creating real and sustainable economic opportunities
- Provide a path for financial sustainability and positive outcomes to the community, such as workforce development or employment opportunities
- Demonstrate success in creating partnerships and/or efforts to leverage additional funding



VFAIF – Application Process

- Steps to apply
 - Pre-proposal and follow up call
 - Develop full application and budget
 - Interview
- Iterative process working with the Program Coordinator



VFAIF – Components of Application

I – Overview

II – Project Description

III – Required Criteria

IV – Optional Criteria

V – Budget and Budget Narrative

VI – Work Plan

VII – Metrics and Outcomes

VIII – Community Support

IX – Resume



VFAIF – Budget and Eligible Expenses

- Personnel
- Travel
- Infrastructure
- Equipment
- Supplies/Materials
- Contractual
- Purchase of Virginia-Grown Products
- Other



Timeline

- April 30 – grant round closes
- May – June – interviews scheduled
- June – grant awards made



Grant Administration

- Grant period of up to two years
- Reporting will be required midway through the period
- Final funding will be awarded upon receipt of the final report
- VDACS will be available throughout the period to provide assistance to help meet goals and objectives
- FY 2021 grant recipients will be eligible to apply in FY 2022



Contacts

Sara Santa Cruz

Ph: (804) 398-0382

Sara.SantaCruz@vdacs.virginia.gov

or

Stephen Versen

Ph: (804) 786-6911

Stephen.Versen@vdacs.virginia.gov

Virginia Department of Agriculture and Consumer Services

<http://www.vdacs.virginia.gov/marketing-food-access-investment-fund>

