



*VIRGINIA DEPARTMENT
OF AGRICULTURE AND
CONSUMER SERVICES*

**VIRGINIA FOOD ACCESS
INVESTMENT FUND ANNUAL REPORT**

By:

Dr. Jewel H. Bronaugh
Commissioner of Agriculture and Consumer Services

December 1, 2020

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EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

The purpose of this report is to communicate the activities and accomplishments of the Virginia Food Access Investment Fund (Fund) and Virginia Food Access Investment Program (Program) covering the period from July 1, 2020, to December 1, 2020, as required by Chapters 956 and 957 of the 2020 Acts of Assembly. Chapters 956 and 957 established the Fund and the Program to combat food inequality through a grant program aimed at encouraging grocery stores and other food retailers to combat food deserts. Chapters 956 and 957 also required the establishment of an Equitable Food Oriented Development (EFOD) stakeholder work group to develop recommendations for design elements for the Program. A total of \$1.25 million from the general fund was allocated to VDACS in the 2020 biennial budget to operate the Program consistent with the provisions of Chapters 956 and 957. No expenditures were made prior to December 1, 2020, and no projects have been funded. It is anticipated that the first round of grants will be awarded from the Fund in spring 2021.

Fiscal Year (FY)	FY 2021	FY 2022
Budget Allocation	\$1,125,000	\$125,000

Significant activities for the Fund and Program during this reporting period include the following:

- Convened the required EFOD stakeholder work group, which was comprised of legislators, community leaders, and professionals with experience in food access and food security;
- Developed a set of guidelines for the Program to provide grants funding the construction, rehabilitation, equipment upgrades, or expansion of grocery stores, small food retailers, or innovative food retail projects in underserved communities.
- Initiated the process to hire a Program Coordinator; and
- Created a Request for Proposal for a Certified Development Financial Institute to partner with to assist in administering the Program and carrying out the purposes of the Fund.

OVERVIEW

Section 36-156.5 et seq. of the Code of Virginia (Code) requires the Commissioner of the Department of Agriculture and Consumer Services (VDACS) to submit an annual report on the activities of the Fund to the Secretary of Commerce and Trade, the Governor, and the chairmen of the House Committee on Appropriations and the Senate Committee on Finance and Appropriations on or before December 1 of each year. VDACS must annually report the number of projects funded; the geographic distribution of the projects; the costs of the Program; the outcomes, including the number and type of jobs created and health initiatives associated with the Program; and such other matters regarding the Fund as VDACS may deem appropriate, including the amount of funding committed to projects from the Fund, or other items requested by any of the foregoing persons to whom such report is to be submitted

The following are the requirements of the Fund and Program as established in § 36-156.3 et seq. of the Code:

- A. The Fund shall be established on the books of the Comptroller. All funds appropriated for such purpose and any gifts, donations, grants, bequests, and other funds received on its behalf shall be paid into the state treasury and credited to the Fund. Interest earned on moneys in the Fund shall remain in the Fund and be credited to it. Any moneys remaining in the Fund, including interest thereon, at the end of each fiscal year shall not revert to the general fund but shall remain in the Fund. Moneys in the Fund shall be used solely for the purposes of establishing collaborative and cooperative projects with public and private sector partners to improve food access in Virginia. The Fund shall be used to provide funding for the construction, rehabilitation, equipment upgrades, or expansion of grocery stores, small food retailers, or innovative food retail projects in underserved communities. Expenditures and disbursements from the Fund shall be made by the State Treasurer on warrants issued by the Comptroller upon written request signed by the Commissioner of the Department of Agriculture and Consumer Services.”
- B. “[VDACS] shall establish a Program to provide grants funding the construction, rehabilitation, equipment upgrades, or expansion of grocery stores, small food retailers, or innovative food retail projects in underserved communities. [VDACS] shall select and work in collaboration with a [community development financial institution that provides credit and financial services for underserved communities (CDFI)] to assist in administering the Program and carrying out the purposes of the Fund. The CDFI selected by [VDACS] shall have (i) a statewide presence in Virginia, (ii) experience in food-based lending, (iii) a proven track record of leveraging private and philanthropic funding, and (iv) the capability to dedicate sufficient staff to manage the Program. Working with the selected CDFI, [VDACS] shall establish monitoring and accountability mechanisms for projects receiving funding and shall report annually the number of projects funded; the geographic distribution of the projects; the costs of the Program; and the outcomes, including the number and type of jobs created and health initiatives associated with the Program.”
- C. “The Program shall:
 - 1. Identify food access projects that include grocery stores, small food retailers, and innovative food retail projects;

2. Provide grants for the purposes described in [paragraph B above];
3. Require that grant recipients (i) accept expenditures of benefits provided under the supplemental nutrition assistance program in accordance with the federal Food Stamp Act (7 U.S.C. § 2011 et seq.) and (ii) participate in a program that matches or supplements the benefits identified in clause (i), such as Virginia Fresh Match;
4. Provide technical assistance; and
5. Bring together community partners to sustain the Program.”

D. “[VDACS] shall develop guidelines to carry out the Program to meet the intent of the Fund. Up to 10 percent of the moneys in the Fund may be designated for the CDFI's administrative and operations costs to assist in administering and managing the Program, unless those costs are provided for in other budgets or in-kind resources.”

In addition, Chapters 956 and 957 of the 2020 Acts of Assembly included an enactment clause that requires:

“That [VDACS] establish an Equitable Food Oriented Development stakeholder work group to develop recommendations for design elements for the Virginia Food Access Investment Program created by this act.”

In establishing the Program and Fund, the General Assembly created a program with a specific focus on historically underserved and minority communities using the Equitable Food Oriented Development (EFOD) model to reduce food insecurity and expand access to healthy and affordable food. According to the U.S. Department of Agriculture, food insecurity is defined as inconsistent and insufficient access to food. In Virginia, Feeding America’s Map the Meal Gap estimates that approximately 842,870 adults and children experienced food insecurity in 2018. Recently, the COVID-19 pandemic has resulted in high levels of unemployment and decreases in economic status that are estimated to result in an additional 275,000 Virginians experiencing food insecurity in 2020. Currently, there are more than 1 million Virginians who are unsure as to whether they will have access to a sufficient supply of food.

Food insecurity goes hand in hand with health disparities. According to Governor Northam’s recently announced Roadmap to End Hunger, studies have shown that food insecurity correlates with decreased nutrient intake, increased mental health problems, diabetes, and hypertension. Nutrition programs can help overcome some of these issues by offering affordable access to fresh, healthy foods. The federal Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program (SNAP) provides food-purchasing assistance for low- and no-income people. In addition, Virginia has the Virginia Fresh Match nutrition incentives program that doubles the value of SNAP vouchers spent at participating farmers’ markets and food stores. Virginia Fresh Match helps people access healthy and affordable fruits and vegetables while supporting local farmers. Chapters 956 and 957 require that the Fund’s grant recipients (i) accept expenditures of benefits provided under SNAP in accordance with the federal Food Stamp Act (7 U.S.C. § 2011 et seq.) and (ii) participate in a program that matches or supplements SNAP benefits, such as Virginia Fresh Match.

ACTIVITIES

The following describes the activities of the Fund and Program from July 1, 2020 – November 30, 2020:

EFOD STAKEHOLDER WORK GROUP

Upon enactment of Chapters 956 and 957 on July 1, 2020, VDACS worked with the Secretary of Agriculture and Forestry to identify potential members to serve on the mandated EFOD stakeholder work group. Candidates were identified and invited to join the work group in early July, with an introductory meeting held on July 30, 2020. Subsequent meetings of the full group were held on September 10, 2020, and November 19, 2020. A subcommittee tasked with the creation of guidelines to carry out the Program to meet the intent of the Fund met twice in August. All meetings were held remotely. A full list of committee members can be found in Appendix I.

According to DAISA Enterprises, a group at the forefront of developing the EFOD model, EFOD is a “development strategy that uses food and agriculture to create economic opportunities and healthy neighborhoods and explicitly seeks to build community assets, pride, and power by and with historically marginalized communities.”¹ For a project or an organization to qualify as EFOD, it must (i) be based in equity- and justice-first principles, (ii) be place- and people-based, (iii) use market-based business strategies, (iv) include community leadership development and community organization, and (v) build community ownership. These criteria were critical in establishing the Program guidelines. More information on the EFOD criteria can be found in Appendix II.

PROGRAM GUIDELINES

The first task in establishing the Program was to develop the Program guidelines to meet the intent of the Fund. The full workgroup met three times, and the EFOD Guidelines subcommittee met twice.

The following outlines the workgroup’s and subcommittee’s activities:

July 30, 2020: The first meeting of the work group included introductions by Secretary of Agriculture and Forestry Bettina Ring, Delegate Delores McQuinn, and Senator Jennifer McClellan. The focus of the first meeting was to establish an understanding of the legislation and the role of the workgroup. Trisha Chakrabarti of DAISA Enterprises and Rudy Espinoza of Inclusive Action provided background on EFOD and how the EFOD structure will provide the framework for the work group’s efforts. The meeting culminated in the full work group establishing a subcommittee to develop Program guidelines.

August 12, 2020: The first meeting of the subcommittee focused on a discussion of the EFOD criteria that needed to be incorporated into the Program’s guidelines (see Appendix II). The committee discussed funding goals and what success would look like. Recommendations were made to ensure that the Program would be inclusive of all marginalized and underserved communities and to take into account other systemic challenges that lead to food insecurity, such as financial literacy and transportation. The group advised that a percentage of the food purchased

¹ DAISA Enterprises, <https://www.efod.org/>

through this program should come from small, beginning, limited resource, military veteran, or socially disadvantaged producers.

August 27, 2020: The second and final meeting of the subcommittee focused on a discussion of the draft Program guidelines, which were prepared by VDACS. The subcommittee highlighted the need outlined in the Program objectives to tie the Program back to the commitment to increase equity and justice and the need to support both new and existing businesses and recommended that a statewide assessment of other successful food retail project models be undertaken. The subcommittee approved recommended parameters for the first grant round, including allocating \$400,000 for grants awarded in the first year of the Program and an extended grant period with defined beginning and end dates. The subcommittee also discussed creating two levels of criteria for projects: (i) *required criteria*, such as having a retail component where consumers can purchase fresh foods; and (ii) *desired criteria*, which can incorporate additional EFOD principles such as integrating community culture and artistic expression in the business model. A full list of project criteria can be found in the guidelines in Appendix III. In addition, the evaluation rubric, which will enable grant reviewers to impartially assess each project's ability to meet these guidelines, can be found in Appendix IV.

September 10, 2020: The second meeting of the full work group focused on the draft Program guidelines recommended by the subcommittee and suggested edits. Discussion centered on project eligibility and requirements, including eventually increasing the minimum Virginia-grown purchase requirement from 25 percent to 100 percent, while recognizing the challenges to implementing such a requirement immediately. With regard to the application process, the work group focused on incorporating EFOD principles such as the addition of a requirement that applicants complete an EFOD self-assessment and a requirement that a member of the impacted community participate in each grant applicants interview. The work group also expressed interest in making sure that the Program guidelines ensure that awarded grantees are good stewards of the funds. As a result, the group decided that the first year's grant award amounts will range from \$5,000 to \$50,000, as opposed to the \$70,000 upper limit initially recommended by the subcommittee.

November 19, 2020: The third and final meeting of the work group focused on reviewing and finalizing the Program guidelines and the grant evaluation rubric (Rubric). Following a discussion of both documents, the group unanimously approved the Program guidelines and the Rubric, pending minor edits. The pending edits to the Rubric will provide additional clarity to the grading scale and to some of the metrics. The group discussed using the Rubric as an initial screening for grant applicants, with the understanding that the interview process will allow evaluators to capture more nuance, such as an applicant's enthusiasm or passion. The final Program guidelines can be found in Appendix III and the final Rubric in Appendix IV.

Following the approval of the Rubric and Program guidelines, the Commissioner shared her goal of opening the inaugural grant round in mid-December. The grant round is anticipated to remain open for several months to allow ample time for outreach and advertising and to help applicants through the grant process. Awards are likely to be made in spring 2021. The group discussed the role of the work group moving forward, and a significant number of participants expressed interest in remaining involved, particularly with regard to evaluating grant applications.

For more information on the EFOD stakeholder work group, including agendas, minutes and complete recordings of all of the meetings, please visit the VDACS website: <https://www.vdacs.virginia.gov/marketing-agriculture-and-forestry-development.shtml>.

CDFI REQUEST FOR PROPOSAL (RFP)

Chapters 956 and 957 require that VDACS select and work in collaboration with a CDFI that provides credit and financial services for underserved communities. Up to 10 percent of the moneys in the Fund may be designated for the CDFI's administrative and operations costs to assist in administering and managing the Program, unless those costs are provided for in other budgets or in-kind resources. CDFIs are not-for-profit financial institutions that provide loans, lines of credit, and other financial services. They are licensed by the U.S. Treasury to serve particular target markets, either broad or specific, and often receive public sector or foundation grants to provide loans to projects that traditional banks would consider to be high risk. The role of the CDFI in the Program will be to provide back-end assistance, including tracking metrics and assessing success.

VDACS has prepared an RFP to select a CDFI. In order to meet the statutory requirements, any CDFI applying for a role in the Program must have: (i) a statewide presence in Virginia, (ii) experience in food-based lending, (iii) a proven track record of leveraging private and philanthropic funding, and (iv) the capability to dedicate sufficient staff to manage the Program. In addition to the statutory requirements, the work group suggested that the CDFI be familiar with EFOD principles and to be minority-owned or have Black, Indigenous, or people of color representation on its Board.

The RFP was finalized and announced in November. VDACS will take an active role in sharing the announcement and will proactively reach out to any qualifying CDFIs in Virginia. Once the RFP period closes, all of the proposals will be evaluated and a final CDFI selection will be made.

PROGRAM COORDINATOR

The \$1.25 million appropriated by the General Assembly to the Fund includes \$125,000 annually over the biennium to fund a full-time Program Coordinator position. The individual hired for this role will (i) provide technical assistance to applicants, both in the application process and in applying for SNAP benefits; (ii) conduct extensive outreach and marketing to historically underserved communities; (iii) act as grant administrator, tracking applications and ensuring that funding proposals are meeting their stated goals; and (iv) promote healthy eating practices throughout the Commonwealth. VDACS created a position description, which was posted on the Commonwealth's Virginia Jobs website on November 4 with an anticipated closing date of November 18. However, based on feedback from stakeholders, VDACS pulled the original job posting to incorporate more EFOD-focused language and reposted the position on November 23 with a closing date of December 4. It is anticipated that the new Program Coordinator will begin in January or February 2021.

APPENDIX I

EFOD STAKEHOLDER WORK GROUP MEMBERS

Jeanette Abi-Nader*, Director, Cultivate Charlottesville
Chelsi Bennett*, Virginia Government Relations Director, American Heart Association
Shantell Bingham*, Program Director, Cultivate Charlottesville
Elizabeth Borst*, Executive Director, Virginia Community Food Connections
Curtis Byrd, Director of Advocacy and Community Relations, Chesapeake Regional Healthcare
Michael Carter, Jr.*, Virginia Field Organizer, Black Church Food Security Network
Sarah Collins, Public Policy Coordinator, Virginia Academy of Nutrition and Dietetics
Amy Rose Foll*, Owner and Operator, Spotted Pig Farm/Virginia Free Farm
Norm Gold*, Developer and Operator, The Market at 25th
Patricia Gould-Champ*, Assistant Professor, Virginia Union University
Twandra Lomax-Brown, Unit Coordinator Extension Agent, Family and Consumer, Virginia
Cooperative Extension
Chad Martin*, Vice Mayor, City of Martinsville, Virginia
Chris McDonald, Director of Government Relations, Virginia Association of Counties
Delegate Delores McQuinn*, District 70, Virginia General Assembly
Eddie Oliver, Executive Director, Federation of Virginia Food Banks
Cheryl Ivey Green, Executive Minister, First Baptist Church of Richmond
Cynthia Newbille, Councilmember, Richmond City Council and Advisor to the President,
Richmond Memorial Health Foundation
Senator William M. Stanley, Jr., District 20, Virginia General Assembly
Toni Washington, Division Director, Benefit Program, Virginia Department of Social Services
Kent Williamson, President, Piedmont Progressive Farmers Group

* Indicates member of the Program guidelines subcommittee

APPENDIX II

EFOD CRITERIA

EFOD Criteria	INDICATORS OF EFOD	CONTRADICTION OF EFOD
Equity- and justice-first	Equity & justice are part of mission, unapologetically represent a historically marginalized community, clearly working on systems change, power change & accountability in operations; ongoing commitment to teaching/including larger transformation; involved in other organizing, advocacy, or policy work – it's not just about food	Language and mission is general or just development or food related (i.e. "all lives matter"); community transformation is an intention but not yet in practice
Place- and People-based	Embedded in a community or regional network with strong community identity; prioritize culture and artistic and cultural expression; a history of work in this community; leadership has historical connection to social justice in that community	Not connected to community; national or regional without accountability to particular community with distinct identity
Use market-based/ business strategies	Developing new markets and enterprises, creating real economic opportunities, sustainable	Exclusively education, policy, or awareness building; no direct service programming; solely community gardens, no sales or marketing aspect
Community leadership development/ community organizing	Board of Directors and top leadership is representative of the community organization serves, often People of Color-led; work is by & for community members; critical convener role in development projects, serving to maintain community sovereignty, local/county planning involvement	Community served has no real power, decision-making, living-wage jobs in organization
Community ownership	Building community-member assets, equity. often uses alternative economic structures and decision-making processes so community members can have ownership (i.e. co-ops); representative board membership	Outside capital, business owned by outside institutions or people; primarily job creation or training

EFOD.ORG

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APPENDIX III

VIRGINIA FOOD ACCESS INVESTMENT FUND GUIDELINES

DRAFT

Program Overview

The Virginia Food Access Investment Fund (VFAIF) is a statewide program that focuses on equity and justice in local food systems by investing in new or expanding food retailers that address food access issues in the Commonwealth. VFAIF offers grants and loans to fund the business development, construction, rehabilitation, equipment upgrades, and expansion of grocery stores, small food retailers, and innovative food retail projects in historically marginalized communities.

Food acts as a common thread between history and culture, neighborhood empowerment and economic sustainability, and healthier lifestyles. The VFAIF program has been developed using the Equitable Food-Oriented Development model (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.

For the purposes of this program, historically marginalized communities are defined as minority or underserved, as well as those experiencing low food access. In these communities, the objectives of this program are to:

- 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 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 is administered by the Virginia Department of Agriculture and Consumer Services (VDACS) in partnership with XXXXX, a Community Development Financial Institution (CDFI).

Eligibility

The VFAIF program is a unique opportunity that is focused on historically marginalized communities. Specifically, VFAIF and EFOD are focused on vulnerable communities, including BIPOC and low-income individuals who have been disproportionately affected by unequal investment and growth, including a lack of access to capital.

To meet the goals of EFOD, applicants for the VFAIF program who are BIPOC owned or led, or who work in partnership with BIPOC individuals or entities, will be prioritized. Applicants may be individuals, farms, nonprofits, organizations (faith-based or others), or for-profit businesses.

Eligible projects include the business development, construction, rehabilitation, equipment upgrades, or expansion of:

- Grocery stores that primarily sell meat, seafood, fruits, vegetables, dairy products, dry groceries, household products, sundries, and healthy food options
- Innovative food retail projects such as mobile markets or delivery models, including food trucks
- Small food retailers, such as small-scale stores, neighborhood stores, small groceries, farmers' markets, or corner stores
- Small, limited resource or socially disadvantaged farmers and ranchers; small, limited resource or socially disadvantaged farm co-ops, community gardens, restaurants or cafes with a direct food retail component or in partnership with a qualified food retailer, food hub, Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program (SNAP) Community Supported Agriculture (CSA), and/or farm stand

Eligible uses of funding may include, but are not limited to, seed money or funds for implementation, such as site development or the purchase of equipment.

VFAIF will not fund stand-alone business entities without a food retail component or food retail partner, traditional food banks/food pantries, or the purchase of land.

Projects must meet the following requirements to be considered for funding:

- Have a retail component where consumers can purchase fresh meats, seafood, dairy, produce, and/or healthy food options
- Be owned or substantially run by BIPOC leadership or be working with a BIPOC-run organization in an active, ongoing partnership, which must include shared leadership, decision-making, resources, and/or shared economic benefit
- Directly serve residents within underserved, low food access communities
- Demonstrate a history of community engagement, work in the community, and community support for the project
- Accept SNAP benefits and offer Virginia Fresh Match incentives
- Purchase a minimum of 25% of fresh products from Virginia's small, beginning, limited resource, Veteran, and/or socially disadvantaged farmers and ranchers (as designated by USDA/ERS ers.usda.gov).

Prioritization will be given to projects that meet the following criteria:

- Provide customer access, either by providing/coordinating transportation to the business or by providing a mobile market component that brings products to the community
- Integrate community culture and artistic expression in the business model

- Develop new markets and enterprises, creating real and sustainable economic opportunities
- Provide a path for financial sustainability and positive outcomes to the community, including education, leadership and youth development, employment of community residents, job training, or workforce development
- Demonstrate success in creating partnerships and/or efforts to leverage additional funding. Include a defined plan to create partnerships that allow the business to offset the cost of products sold to the consumer.

Application Process

The VFAIF application period will be announced annually. Grant award amounts will range from \$5,000 to \$50,000 per project, per year. Successful projects may apply for additional funding in subsequent years upon completion of the previous project (for instance, an applicant could receive \$10,000 to purchase refrigeration in year one and then apply for \$50,000 to expand processing capability in year two).

To apply, applicants must first complete the application and an Equitable Food-Oriented Self-Assessment (to be found at XXXXX) to determine eligibility. The grant review committee will review the application and assessment. Upon determining that the project meets the VFAIF criteria, the review committee will schedule an interview to discuss the project. Applicants should identify local community member(s) who can speak to the applicant's community engagement and work in the community and who can provide community support for the project plan. Successful applications will show a clear vision and plan, including a timeline and deliverables; will have a comprehensive budget; and will demonstrate a path to financial sustainability or profitability.

Grant Resources and Support:

The VDACS Food Access Program Coordinator, who primarily focuses on the administration of the Virginia Food Access Investment Fund and Program, will provide technical assistance and outreach to grant applicants to assist with the application process and grant implementation. The Coordinator will serve as the main point of contact for questions regarding how to complete the grant application, prepare the proposal, and participate in the grant interview process. The Coordinator will work alongside successful grant recipients to assist them in identifying and partnering with other potential financial resources and to ensure they have or are able to accept SNAP benefits and the Virginia Fresh Match incentive. In addition, the Coordinator will work with partner food-based organizations to develop one-time and ongoing educational workshops and technical assistance to aid grant recipients in becoming sustainable and successful.

The Community Development Financial Institution (CDFI) serves as a critical partner to VDACS in grant program administration and implementation in support of VFAIF grant recipients. The CDFI will assist grant recipients with business development resources and connect them with financial resources, such as low-interest or no-interest loans, to provide additional sources of funding. ADDITIONAL INFORMATION TO BE ADDED WHEN CDFI IS DETERMINED....

Please visit the VDACS website to locate information and services that can help you successfully develop and sustain your community-based business. **ADDITIONAL INFORMATION TO BE ADDED WHEN THE WEBSITE IS ACTIVE...**

If you have any questions about the process or need help completing the application, please contact:

Jennifer Perkins
Office of Agriculture Forestry and Development
Jennifer.perkins@vdacs.virginia.gov

APPENDIX IV

EVALUATION RUBRIC

Mandatory Evaluation Criteria		
Has a retail component where consumers can purchase fresh meats, seafood, dairy, produce, and/or healthy food options		
Excellent	The applicant has an existing retail component that already enables consumers to purchase fresh food.	6 - 10
Good	The applicant has either: 1) a business plan that includes adding the sale of fresh foods to an existing retail component that does not currently offer them; or 2) a clear plan to develop a retail component that includes the sale of fresh foods.	1 - 5
Poor	The applicant has no retail component for fresh foods and no plan to implement one.	0

Mandatory Evaluation Criteria		
Be owned or substantially run by BIPOC leadership or be working with a BIPOC-run organization in active partnership, to include shared leadership, decision-making, resources, etc.		
Excellent	The applicant individual or organization is BIPOC or majority BIPOC-run and/or is actively partnered with a BIPOC-led organization. For partnerships, the applicant must show that this is an active, ongoing partnership with shared decision-making and that the partner shares from the economic benefit.	6 - 10
Good	The applicant individual or organization is not BIPOC or BIPOC individuals constitute a minority of leadership and/or the business plan includes a plan to partner with a BIPOC-led organization. For applicants intending to partner with a BIPOC-led organization, the organization must already be identified and prepared to actively engage in the project.	1 - 5
Poor	BIPOC individuals are not part of the ownership or leadership.	0

Mandatory Evaluation Criteria		
Directly serves residents within underserved, low food access communities		
Excellent	The project directly serves an underserved, low food access community.	6 - 10
Good	The project has a business plan outlining how it plans to serve an underserved, low food access community.	1 - 5
Poor	The project does not serve an underserved, low food access community.	0

Mandatory Evaluation Criteria		
Demonstrates a history of community engagement, work in the community, and community support for the project		
Excellent	The applicant has a clearly established history of work in the community. The project has demonstrated support from leaders, both formal and informal, in the community.	6 - 10

Good	The applicant is relatively new to the community but is knowledgeable on issues central to the community; the applicant has engaged in outreach with local community leaders, both formal and informal, and has support for the project.	1 - 5
Poor	The applicant has no history with or connection to the community.	0

Mandatory Evaluation Criteria

Accepts SNAP benefits and offers Virginia Fresh Match incentives

Excellent	The applicant is currently able to offer or accept SNAP and is prepared to offer or accept Virginia Fresh Match incentives.	6 - 10
Good	The applicant is unable to accept SNAP but has a clear plan and timeline to become eligible for both SNAP and Fresh Match.	1 - 5
Poor	The applicant has no plan to accept SNAP and Virginia Fresh Match.	0

Mandatory Evaluation Criteria

Purchases a minimum of 25% of fresh products from Virginia's small, beginning, limited resource, Veteran, and/or socially disadvantaged farmers and ranchers

Excellent	The applicant is currently purchasing 25% or more of fresh products from Virginia's small, beginning, limited resource, Veteran, and/or socially disadvantaged producers. Strong applicants will demonstrate the existence of partnerships with producers, up to and including letters of support indicating that farmers are providing sufficient fresh products.	6 - 10
Good	The applicant has a clear plan to purchase 25% or more of fresh products from Virginia's small, beginning, limited resource, Veteran, and/or socially disadvantaged producers. Strong applicants will demonstrate the development of partnerships with producers, up to and including letters of support indicating that farmers will be able to provide sufficient fresh products.	1 - 5
Poor	The applicant has no plan to purchase fresh products from Virginia's small, beginning, limited resource, Veteran, and/or socially disadvantaged farmers and ranchers.	0

Additional Evaluation Criteria

Provides customer access, either by providing/coordinates transportation to the business or by providing a mobile market component that brings products to the community

Excellent	The applicant currently has a transportation component as part of its operation.	4 - 6
Good	The applicant has included a transportation component in its business plan, providing a clear budget and timeline for implementation.	1 - 3
Poor	There is no plan to include transportation in the business model.	0

Additional Evaluation Criteria

Integrates community culture and artistic expression in the business model

Excellent	The applicant currently incorporates methods of expressing the culture, arts, and history of the community in its business plan. The applicant works with BIPOC community artists, storytellers, historians, and community leaders to inform the plan and to create artwork or other design elements that are relevant to the community.	4 - 6
Good	The applicant has a plan to incorporate the culture, arts, and history of the community into its business plan. The applicant plans to work with BIPOC community artists, storytellers, historians, and community leaders to inform the plan and to create artwork or other design elements that are relevant to the community.	1 - 3
Poor	The applicant does not have a plan to incorporate the culture, arts, and history of the community into its business plan.	0

Additional Evaluation Criteria

Develops new markets and enterprises, creating real and sustainable economic opportunities

Excellent	The applicant has clearly articulated a plan for the business's long-term sustainability outside of grant programs. The business plan identifies both short-term gains and long-term potential growth with a high likelihood of success.	4 - 6
Good	The applicant has identified some elements of both short- and long-term growth but has not fully identified a path to sustainability.	1 - 3
Poor	The business is unlikely to succeed without ongoing grant support.	0

Additional Evaluation Criteria

Provides a path for financial sustainability and positive outcomes to the community, including education, leadership and youth development, employment of community residents, job training, or workforce development

Excellent	The applicant has clearly identified benefit(s) to the community, such as reserving a certain number of jobs for residents and providing internships/training for youth. Strong applications will clearly demonstrate methods and timelines for attaining outcomes and will show how they are using models with proven success.	4 - 6
Good	The applicant intends to add benefit(s) to the community to the business plan but has not yet fully identified the manner or timeline.	1 - 3
Poor	The applicant provides no plan for adding community benefit(s) to the business plan.	0

Additional Evaluation Criteria

Demonstrates success in creating partnerships and/or efforts to leverage additional funding. Includes a defined plan to create partnerships that allow the business to offset the cost of products sold to the consumer

Excellent	The applicant has well established partnerships or a defined plan to create partnerships that will allow the business to offset the cost of products sold to the consumer. Strong applications will show that potential partners have already been identified and that they support the project.	4 - 6
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Good	The applicant has tentative plans to create partnerships but does not have relationships in place or letters of support from potential partners.	1 - 3
Poor	The applicant has no plan to create partnerships.	0

Additional Feedback	
Please use this space for any additional feedback not captured in the scoring rubric.	
<p>Note: Additional criteria will be added to this section of the evaluation rubric for use during applicant interviews. The criteria included in this section will provide an opportunity to rate "softer" skills not listed above. Use of additional criteria may shed light on an applicant's potential for success and include rating criteria such as: expressed passion for the project, potential for success, clarity of ideas, clear and concise use of resources, etc.</p>	0 - 5