Food Security Grant Application

Concepts & Terms Explained

The world of "food security" has changed significantly over recent years, and the way we talk about it and address it has also changed. At one time, the focus was on providing food (any kind of food!) to those in need, on an emergency basis. Over time, it became more clearly important to begin shifting focus to not only providing emergency food resources, but to ensure that those food options were fresh, healthy, and nutritious.

Then, it became more noticeable that "emergency" food resources were not being used on an emergency basis, but rather, they had become a part of society's way of life, a tool that helped many people to "make it" from day to day. That is when the question became less about how to get food to people, and more about why people needed the food in the first place.

As a result of this realization, a great deal of work has been done to understand the root causes of poverty and some individuals' and families' reliance on emergency food resources. Following this idea, a seemingly whole new vernacular has surfaced, and these ideas and concepts will be important for you to understand as you draft your application narrative.

Please see below for guidance on how to address 3 of the major food-security questions that are required as part of the application.

Local Food System Sectors

Producing – Does your project assist local farmers/growers/producers in growing more food, or in meeting the demand of local processors? Does it help residents to access the supplies, equipment, knowledge, and support needed to produce food for themselves and their families?

Eating - Does your project allow people to eat when they otherwise would have nothing to eat? Does it allow for increased nutrition in residents' diets? Is the overall bar of the community's nutrition going to be raised by your project?

Preparing – Does your project help people to access prepared meals? Does it teach residents' to prepare their own food, or provide the tools and resources needed to do so? Does it go a step beyond simply giving people access to food?

Retailing – Does your project change the way food products are sold in the community? Does it make food products more available or more affordable than usual in a particular area?

Distributing – Does your project assist food distributors with strengthening their connections between growers and buyers?

Processing – Does your project help processors to work more effectively with local farmers and producers? Does it helps producers to move more local food through retail channels?

Food Security Focus Areas

The Food Security Focus Areas can best be described through examples, and following are the category names and some examples of the types of projects that might fall into each category.

Structures, policies, systems (governmental policies/laws): Does your project affect local policies and laws that are meant to regulate or support healthy actions? Ex: Implementing zoning regulations that prohibit the marketing of unhealthy foods to children in certain areas;

Institutions (rules, policies, & informal structures): Does your project affect the way local institutions (schools, hospitals, food pantries, etc.) manage food issues? Ex: A school campaign to save all unused lunch items (milk, apples, etc.) to package up and send home with food-insecure students.

Community (norms, standards): Does your project affect the way a community views and supports healthy food as a group? Ex: Implementing behavioral design practices to encourage healthy choices; and addressing transportation barriers so that everyone has reasonable accessibility to healthy food choices.

Interpersonal (family, peers, social networks): Does your project affect specific groups of people, with the idea that they will experience the benefits and then share with others? Ex: Educational campaigns in schools, where students learn healthy behaviors/choices and then share information with family members.

Individual (knowledge, attitudes, beliefs): Does your project educate community members, or incentivize them to make healthy choices, or does it support them in understanding the importance of doing so? Ex: Teaching gardening techniques and providing seeds to start container gardens at home.

Benefits to the Community

In recent years, it has become clear that food insecurity is not the problem itself, but rather it is a symptom of the problem. Given this fact, sometimes the "solutions" to food insecurity will have other results that do not necessarily look like "providing food to hungry people". Categories of some of the potential benefits are as follows:

Healthy residents: This may be due to people making healthier food choices, and it may also look like people who are healthier (through exercise regimens, or mental health programs, etc.), who now make better food choices.

Community/social vitality: This includes a community being able to sustain itself in meaningful ways. The McConnell Foundation, for example, describes it as a community's members facing its problems together, and working together to help the entire community to thrive.

Local food policy (County/City/School district): This could look like supporting farm-to school programs; or implementing programs that require or support the purchase and utilization of food from local growers and producers.

Jobs: Better-paying jobs can help families and individuals to improve their own food security, and creating jobs within some of the food-related sectors (i.e., processing and distributing), can help to improve the food system from multiple angles.

Farmland preservation: The Schenectady County Agricultural and Farmland Protection Plan (2002) indicates 3 goal categories to focus on:

- Improved marketing;
- Enhanced economic development initiatives;
- Education for non-farmers and producers.