

## Scope of Services

The services requested by the County under this solicitation are for the Fresh Food Pathways Program Manager Services to run a community-based Pilot FOOD HUB. This pilot project will be implemented from early 2024 through 2026. Approximately \$962,000 is allocated to the pilot FOOD HUB that will serve two to six COVID-impacted communities and multiple institutional food purchasers in Alachua County.

**Project Timeline:** The project will be implemented over two years starting in early 2024.

**Project Budget:** The total project budget is approximately \$962,000. At a minimum, proposals must allocate 80% of funds to Food Hub services and a maximum of 20% to Emergency Food Assistance programming.

This RFP will be open to all organizations interested in implementing Food Hubs in Alachua County.

### General Requirements:

The Consultant selected will provide the following services, including but not limited to:

### Project Work Scope and Overview

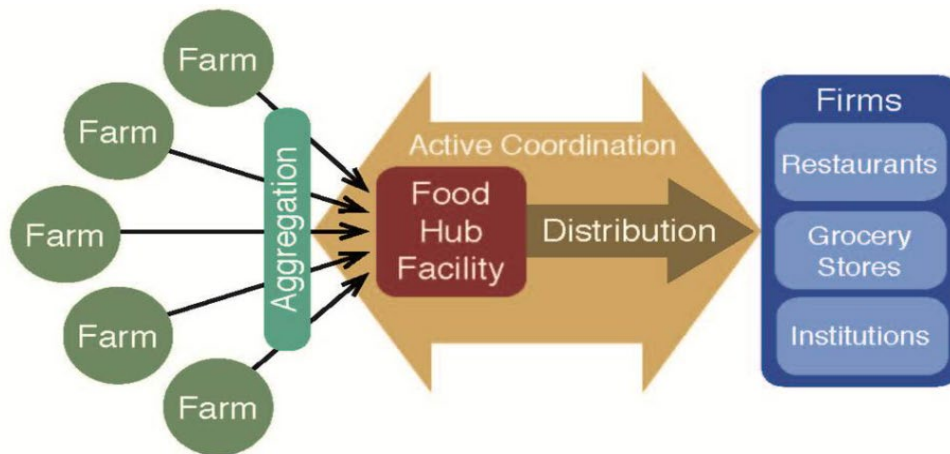
The Fresh Food Pathways project aims to support the connection between two types of communities/populations through the construction of a Food Aggregation and Distribution Center:

- The first community/population: Rural and urban individuals and communities that have already developed creative, long-standing, and community-rooted solutions to systemic and institutionally imposed limited access to diverse fresh food choices. These communities have faced challenges such as housing segregation, educational segregation, healthcare inequities, mortgage and housing redlining, low-wage jobs, wage stagnation, lack of rights and protections, inequitable access to public resources and public political enfranchisement, in addition to more burdensome access to fresh, healthy, nutrient-rich, culturally appropriate foods in mainstream food retail.
- The second community/population: Locally owned and managed, smaller-scale food and farm businesses and entrepreneurs: Despite facing food system-based challenges, these important producers have continued to adapt and produce food for their community. These businesses face challenges connected to the history and existence of standard and inequitable market forces resulting from the consolidation and industrialization of food processing and distribution channels that co-mingle within equitable and racially based policies related to the systemic distribution of resources and opportunities within societal structures and institutions.

### **Project Goals**

**This project aims to create a two-year pilot of an Aggregation and Distribution Center, also known as a Food Hub for locally sourced food.** According to the [USDA's Regional Food Hub Resource Guide](#), a food hub is a "business or organization that actively manages the aggregation, distribution, and marketing of course-identified food products primarily from local and regional producers to strengthen their ability to

satisfy wholesale, retail, and institutional demand.” (USDA Regional Food Hub Resource Guide, p. 4)



Food Hub diagram courtesy of Craig Page.

Image courtesy of <https://secure.caes.uga.edu/news/multimedia/images/1152/foodhub.jpg>

**This Aggregation and Distribution Center, AKA community-based Pilot Food Hub, will:**

- Create a pilot program that will serve as a model for a full-scale Food Hub.
- The pilot program and recommendations in the final report shall be grounded in the Good Food Purchasing Program values. Per the values, the proposer shall address how their response creates a food system:
  - Equity, Accountability, and Transparency
  - Local and Community-Based Economies
  - Environmental Sustainability
  - Valued Workforce
  - Animal Welfare
  - Community Health and Nutrition

Because Good Food Purchasing Program values are diverse in scope, it is recognized that one respondent may need help to address all these values adequately. A coalition or partnership response bringing expertise and voices from the community together into one application is highly encouraged.

- The pilot program may involve partners pooling physical storage resources, refrigerated transportation, and expertise. Though not operationally expedient compared to a full-sized brick-and-mortar Food Hub, this pooling of resources will create a virtual Food Hub to test

market demand, engage farmers, alleviate food insecurity for low-income and marginalized communities, and set the stage for future capital investments.

- Increase access to local, fresh, healthy, and affordable food in communities with limited economic means and access to infrastructure, systems, health, and food options.
- Leverage and connect existing brick-and-mortar food storage facilities and involve and contribute to the growth of mobile (i.e., temporary, movable, and informal) produce markets (stands, transaction areas, and tables) in areas with high need and interest that will offer a variety of culturally appropriate fresh fruits, vegetables, herbs, and other healthful foods at affordable prices. By impacting the following areas of food access, provision, and health:
  - Emergency food assistance with regular distribution opportunities
  - Coalitions and partnerships with like-minded programs that promote better health outcomes and economic development opportunities from having access to nutritious foods and a working food system.
- Regular food sales to institutions such as but not limited to the University of Florida, Alachua County School Board, Alachua County Jail, UF Health, and other local healthcare facilities. Food education and community participation opportunities.
- Support the local food economy by connecting consumers with local farmers and food entrepreneurs. The Food Hub will source its products from local and regional farmers and food businesses, which will help to support the local economy.
  - Addressing the root causes of inequities in the food system by prioritizing small-scale producers and entrepreneurs. The Food Hubs will prioritize working with small-scale farmers and food entrepreneurs, who often face challenges accessing markets and resources. This connection is meant to prime relationships between farmers and consumers by the proposer:
  - Assisting farmers in the aggregation of marketable crops by type, size, weight, volume, standard specifications, food safety
  - Assisting farmers in meeting the overall market needs of the Fresh Food Pathways project and other institutional food purchasers. This may include services such as but not limited to helping farmers create a farm plan or assisting with packing materials for standardized delivery requirements for markets.
  - Addressing the potential of Food as Medicine for low-income and marginalized communities for better health outcomes in partnership with local healthcare providers and community paramedicine programs.
  - Engaging with child, youth, and young adult programs dedicated to land-based education, as well as community-based educational programs and projects related to food, culture, agriculture and heritage, food sovereignty or cultural arts, culinary arts, healthy food, and

- value-added-based projects, and those that are in service to historically marginalized, economically challenged, poor and low-income communities.
- Engage with other community-based and community-situated groups focused on equitable economic development, empowerment, community longevity, and sustainability to innovate and incorporate new connections that are profitably related to food and local systems. ‘
- Engage with partners in already established food pathways, including church networks, afterschool networks, and other emergency and alternative food efforts.
- Provide a final report for the next steps on a five-year timeline along with a suggested ownership model (either a public-private partnership or privately held), operations plan (including community involvement and oversight), business plan, and a ten-year pro forma showing projected revenues and expenses of a full-scale Food Hub. Suggestions for grant funding sources would be appreciated. The final report should also show how the Food Hub’s operation will complement and support related food system organizations in the community while meeting Good Food Purchasing Program values.

#### **Food System Support**

- The FOOD HUB will prioritize purchasing their products from Alachua County farmers and food businesses with sales of no more than \$250,000 per year. Other purchasing sources are secondary in priority and must still occur within the regional food system that meets the same financial criteria.
- The proposer may use the Small Farmer Capital Support Grant contact information as a reference for qualified farmers in Alachua County.
- The regional food system is within a 100-mile radius of the City of Gainesville.
- To strengthen the local food economy, the proposer will prioritize sourcing from:
  - Smaller-scale local farms and food businesses that are economically challenged and or from marginalized communities.
  - Farm and food businesses that meet the Good Food Purchasing Program's standards for fair labor practices.
  - Farm operations that protect workers from heat stress and other hazards and pay them living wages.
- The proposer will support the work of small community organizations and groups that are addressing food inequities in Alachua County. As part of this pilot project, the proposer will identify these groups' obstacles and work with the County or other institutional food purchasers to develop solutions.

- **Food Hub Deliverables**
  - The FOOD HUB will market, aggregate, and distribute fresh produce from local and regional farms as a priority to Communities of Interest and Need. As a secondary priority, any excess or unsold foods in these areas may be sold to institutional or commercial food buyers at market rates.
  - The FOOD HUB will source from farms that meet the Good Food Purchasing Program's standards for fair labor practices. The FOOD HUB will also support the work of small community organizations and groups that are addressing food inequities.
  - The FOOD HUB will use various educational, marketing, and outreach strategies to build a base of potential customers and partners. This educational strategy will employ community-based firms and businesses to educate communities on the intersection between local food, health, heritage, economic development, and community resiliency. This may include but is not limited to canvassing, flyers, banners, loudspeakers, jingles, signage, broadcast, print and social media, digital outreach, ad campaigns, direct mail, and word-of-mouth. The FOOD HUB will also provide training and capacity building for community members to learn to become culturally-situated food educators and food ambassadors.
  - The FOOD HUB will offer a variety of fresh produce and foodstuffs, including some staples. The FOOD HUB will accept multiple forms of payment, including food assistance program benefits. The FOOD HUB will offer nutrition education events, materials, incentives, and subsidized food costs.
  - The FOOD HUB will also support the program's financial sustainability by working with community groups to develop sustainable policies and procedures. The FOOD HUB will also develop evaluation tools to assess the program's impact.

#### **Key Deliverables for the PILOT FOOD HUB**

- Uses The Good Food Purchasing Program values as a guide and touchstone.
- Sources from local and regional farms.
- Supports the work of small community organizations and groups.
- Uses a variety of marketing and outreach strategies.
- Offers a regular variety of fresh produce and foodstuffs for low-income and marginalized communities for sale and donation.
- Accepts multiple forms of payment.

- Offers nutrition education events and materials.
  - Supports the program's financial sustainability with revenues from institutional food sales.
  - Develop evaluation tools for regular Performance Reports.
  - Create a Food Hub Business Plan to support a financially self-sustaining, full-scale, stand-alone facility.

### **Pilot Project Activities**

Proposals to the County should consider the above-referenced Project Goals, Food System Support, and Key Deliverables for the PILOT FOOD HUB. Proposal responses will be organized around the core Pilot Project Activities and related subparts of:

- Engage and Outreach to Communities of Interest to Create a Food Hub Business Plan
- Alachua County's Strategic Food System Aims
- Pilot Project Partnerships and Models
- Project Proposal Administration and Organization

### **Engage and Outreach to Communities of Interest to Create a Food Hub Business Plan:**

- A. Community Engagement – Describe a community engagement plan with the following elements.
  1. The proposal will provide a narrative on how they will meet with community members, institutional food purchasers, local organizations, and other stakeholders to gather input on the project.
  2. The proposer will also highlight how they will create a collaboration plan that shows how grassroots organizations and those most impacted by food inequity are actors and agents within the food hub operations, employment, structures, and outputs.
  3. Describe how the collaborations create employment pathways and capitalize on grassroots knowledge, organizations, skills, and labor in disenfranchised and marginalized neighborhoods.
  4. How that collaboration connects that knowledge to global food issues rooted in community and enfranchisement.
  5. The Proposer will engage the community and farmers in the planning and implementation of the Food Hub.
  6. The Proposer will provide the County with an engagement strategy for the community and farmers. The plan must address food security and sovereignty.
  7. Describe how the Proposer will coordinate with other community groups and partners in an Annual November Emergency Food Assistance Giveaway and Outreach event.

8. Supply holiday food supplies to families in need.
9. Show how the Proposer will partner with community organizations to implement the pilot FOOD HUB. The project will partner with community organizations that generate equity, wealth, and health outcomes in low-income communities, such as but not limited to:
  - i. food as medicine programs,
  - ii. food system entrepreneurial economic development, vocational assistance programs,
  - iii. small farmer assistance,
  - iv. farm worker advocacy,
  - v. food education programs,
  - vi. community garden organizers,
  - vii. food donation services,
  - viii. community education programs, and
  - ix. community resilience and health
- B. Pilot Food Hub Market Analysis – The Proposer will show how they have the expertise to build upon the Community Engagement to create a Pilot Food Hub Market Analysis that will:
  1. Estimate the costs, revenues, expenses, amenities, pro forma, and business plan associated with a full-size stand-alone Food Hub dedicated to Good Food Purchasing Principles around locally sourced food.
  2. Refine the understanding of institutional food purchasing needs for specific crops that can be grown locally and at a scale to meet market demand. These crops should also meet priority community market demand.
  3. Refine the County’s Emergency Food Assistance list of qualified persons needing additional food services.
  4. Identify Geographic Areas of Need, Asset, Interest, and Sustainability for Food Hubs. This may include a community or neighborhood rich in historical assets of food knowledge and food heritage (such as historical agriculturalists or food entrepreneurship) that also faces limited food purchasing choices, lower incomes, and disproportionate incidences of illness, such as but not limited to obesity, hypertension, and diabetes as well as higher rates of health inequity and other related social weights.
- C. Pilot Food Hub Business Plan – With an Engagement Plan and Market Analysis outlined, the Proposer should next define how they will approach creating a Business Plan that will:
  1. Describe a pilot Food Hub or other novel interpretations of the FOOD HUB concept serving up to two COVID-impacted Areas of Need and Interest in Alachua County over the first

- year. The project will expand to serve up to six communities in the second year of service.
2. Define how the markets will be in areas meeting economic and demographic requirements with a high need for and interest in fresh, healthy foods.
  3. The project will service up to 500 individuals previously identified through the County's Emergency Food Assistance program.
  4. Narrate how a community-based organization or coalition will operate the Food Hub.
  5. Verify that the markets will be staffed at living wages at or above the County's minimum wage requirements by people from the communities where they operate.
  6. Show experience in creating or meeting a food safety plan for producers to consumers meeting all regulatory requirements.
  7. Create a Food Hub business plan for community-based marketing, aggregating, and distributing local, fresh, healthy, and affordable food through Food Hubs or equivalent services.
  8. Ensure the markets are accessible, visible, and engaging to all community members.
  9. Describe how the Proposer will establish purchasing relationships with local farmers and institutional food buyers to meet market demand. Nurture demand for locally grown food and create decision-making space for collective production and crop control.
  10. Explain how the Proposer will establish a regular schedule (bi-weekly preferred) to distribute food for emergency food relief (donation) and sale (at subsidized rates if needed) in these Areas of Need and Interest without food access.
  11. Explain how the Proposer will establish regular sales of aggregated food to institutional food purchasers at market rates. Institutional food sales revenue may support subsidized food sales or donations to qualified communities without food access.  
  
These revenues may (and should) also be used to supplement other related ancillary services such as but not limited to food system vocational education, healthy eating awareness, community gardens, neighborhood farms, farmer certification assistance, and farm worker assistance and outreach.
  12. Explain how the Proposer will run a financially sustainable Pilot FOOD HUB that will support local farmers by:
    - i. Regularly purchase food from local farmers and sell food in Areas of Need and Interest.
    - ii. Provide technical and aggregation-distribution assistance to local farmers and market operators. This may include helping farmers create a Farm Plan that aligns with institutional food commodity demands and priority community purchasing preferences.
    - iii. Help local farmers to be financially successful and sustainable.

- iv. Assist farmers in meeting food safety, relevant Good Food Purchasing Program certifications, and farm worker requirements.
13. Be prepared to create an interim Performance Report and presentation to the Board of County Commissioners mid-project. The interim Performance Report will summarize all Project Activities, Performance Indicators, and Outcomes.
14. Acknowledge the pilot's end goal and create a Final Report with a detailed business plan based on lessons learned from the pilot program and coalition partnership on deploying a full-scale Food Hub. The Final Report will also include a summation of all Performance Indicators and Outcomes. All Project Activities should inform the detail and design of the final report. The Proposer will present the final report to the Board of County Commissioners.

### **Alachua County's Strategic Food System Aims**

Overall, the Alachua County Fresh Food Pathways project seeks proposers aligned with the County's Strategic Food System Aims and with the experience and expertise to develop and implement a successful Food Hub to benefit the community, local farmers, and institutional food purchasers.

The Proposer will state how it will meet the County's Strategic Food System Aims in their proposal. The Fresh Food Pathways project is based on previous efforts to map and respond to emergency food needs during COVID-19 and the [Alachua County Commission's Strategic Guide FY 2022](#). The project aims to address the root cause of issues and inequities in the food system by bolstering the local food system in such a way as to increase community engagement, control, and health.

Specifically, the project aims to:

- Implement County Commission adopted Good Food Purchasing Program values (Equity, Accountability, and Transparency; Local and Community-Based Economies; Environmental Sustainability; Valued Workforce; Animal Welfare; Community Health and Nutrition).
- Transform the local food economy by piloting a virtual Food Hub and projecting the scope and cost of a full-size brick-and-mortar facility.
- Support the foundation of the local economy and food system by supporting direct relationships between consumers, small farmers, and food entrepreneurs.
- Improve access to local community and neighborhood markets for consumers and their control over food choice purchases.
- Recognize the strengths of communities that have developed creative solutions to systemic challenges to producing and selling food.
- Address root causes of inequities faced by those who work in the food chain, specifically low and sub-living wages, hazardous working conditions, and lack of power to improve their conditions.
- Encourages novel interpretations of the Food Hub concept to fit community needs, market demand, and financial sustainability of the operation.

### **Pilot Project Partnerships and Models**

Related to the Community Engagement Plan, the Proposer will define its community partnership, members, and qualifications.

- The Proposer will identify its principal members, qualifications, and related past projects.
- The proposal should show how the project will be implemented through partnerships with community organizations and groups already serving the community. In addition to non-profit partners, the proposal may include how it will coordinate with governmental services such as but not limited to SNAP, WIC, Extension Office small farmer services, and the newly established Alachua County Community Healthy Workers program in the Department of Community Support Services.
- The proposal will also show its ability to focus on community engagement and knowledge building. This may involve one-on-one conversations, attendance at community events, neighborhood meetings, speaking engagements, relationship-building activities, and pilot planning with community partners.
- The proposal will identify communities of high need and interest for the FOOD HUB. It will be essential to shift the framing of these communities from one of deficit to one that recognizes their strengths and resilience.
- The proposal will identify how it will support existing strengths by hiring market staff at living wages from within the communities where the markets will operate. It will describe how the Proposer will formally consult with community members.

### **Project Proposal Administration and Organization**

As part of the Proposal's Administration and Organization response, the Proposer will describe how the project will:

- Increase food access by selling ( $\geq 80\%$  of services) and donating ( $\leq 20\%$  of services) fresh, nutrient-rich, locally sourced foods in communities with limited access in Areas of Need and Interest.
- The proposal will identify how it will be financially sustainable in its revenue generation and management of expenses. It will describe how the Proposer will formally engage with institutional food purchasers and how Good Food Purchasing Program values can meet the institution's goals to buy local, ethical, and sustainably sourced foods regularly.
- Estimate the number of families served and the beneficial outcomes of its various community-based services.
- Estimate the demand for services from institutional food purchases.
- Support the local food economy by connecting consumers with local farmers and food entrepreneurs. Make food fun!

- Address root causes of inequities in the food system by prioritizing small-scale, BIPOC, Women and local producers, and community-based food entrepreneurs for purchasing and aggregating food.
- Leverage partnerships with community organizations and groups already serving the community. The proposal will also focus on community engagement and knowledge building to meet the community's food needs and financially sustain the markets.
- Host an annual November Emergency Food Assistance Giveaway and Outreach event in stakeholder communities starting in November 2024 and before Thanksgiving.

The specific deliverables of the of the Project Administration and Organization are as follows:

- Business Plan: Create a business plan for the pilot Food Hub. The business plan should:
  - Describe a pilot Food Hub or other novel interpretations of the FOOD HUB concept serving up to two COVID-impacted Areas of Need and Interest in Alachua County over the first year. The project will expand to serve up to six communities in the second year of service or at roll out of the full-scale program.
  - The markets will be in areas meeting economic and demographic requirements that also have a high need for and interest in fresh, healthy foods.
  - The project will service up to 500 individuals previously identified through the County's Emergency Food Assistance program.
  - A community-based organization or coalition will operate the markets.
  - The markets will be staffed at living wages at or above the County's minimum wage requirements by people from the communities where they operate.
  - Create a food safety plan for producers meeting all regulatory requirements.
- Anticipated Outcomes: In addition to the Performance Reporting requirements below, the Proposer is encouraged to provide other anticipated program overall outcomes to evaluate better the effect of the markets on access to fresh, healthy foods, the local food economy, and equity in the food system. The report should also specifically frame anticipated outcomes based on the Good Food Purchasing Program values (Equity, Accountability, and Transparency; Local and Community-Based Economies; Environmental Sustainability; Valued Workforce; Animal Welfare; Community Health and Nutrition). These Anticipated Outcomes will be part of regular Performance Reports to the County for the Proposer's reimbursement requests.
- Budget and Timeline of Activities
  - The Proposer will submit a two-year estimated project Budget and Timeline of Activities as part of its proposal. The budget and timeline of activities should list all material, professional services, sub-contracts, unit service costs, etc., and major activities of the proposal.

## **Performance Reports**

After the award, the successful Proposer must submit Performance reports to the County.

- In general, Performance Reports will regularly record progress in meeting the Performance Indicators and Outcomes below. The Proposer is encouraged to suggest additional Performance Indicators and Outcomes.
- If awarded, the Proposer will return regular Performance Reports as part of any reimbursement request. An interim Performance Report and presentation to the Board of County Commissioners will be required mid-project. A final Performance Report with the next steps and presentation to the County will be required at the end of the project term.
- Mapping Success in Priority Communities
  - The Proposer will use the Emergency Food Access qualified recipients' contact information provided by the County as a service foundation. The proposer is encouraged to support the food needs of as many individuals as possible within an Area of Need and Interest. The Performance Report should provide quantitative and qualitative data showing how this was achieved.
  - Performance reports will include address and related mapping information for the County to track progress through GIS mapping services.
  - The Proposer is encouraged to use in-person meetings, surveys, social media, and other mechanisms to follow-up with community members to track and report Outcomes.
  - County staff will use this information to measure the following Performance Outcomes and the required Performance Indicators.
  - Performance Indicators
    - Institutional Food Sales in aggregate and by individual institution.
      - Number of participating institutions
      - Crop demand types (lettuce, Seminole pumpkin, etc.), quantities and related quality of crop types,
      - Cost, Revenue, Expenses, Future Projections
    - Low-income and Marginalized Communities
      - Number of participating families. As of January 31, 2023, 492 families were approved to participate in its Emergency Food Assistance program. Previous Emergency Food Assistance funds spent in December 2022 served 920 people.
      - Household family size
      - Crop demand types (lettuce, Seminole pumpkin, etc.), quantities, and related

quality of crop types

- Total amount of food distributed.
- Location of services. Define which communities are receiving services.
- Type and quantities of food distributed by donation and purchase.
- Farmer Metrics
  - Food Sources (Farms with location information), Quantities, and Cost of Local Food
  - Certification and Education Help
  - Number of Farms with a Farm Plan
  - Engagement with Agriculture Justice for Farm Workers
- Performance Outcomes
  - Decrease in food insecurity as reported by families. These indicators will be measured after later food deliveries.
  - Decrease in food-related health problems as reported by families. These indicators will be measured after later food deliveries.
  - Meet Institutional Food Market Demand and Technical Requirements
  - Supports Local Farms with technical assistance, certifications, best practices, and regular and dependable purchasing.
  - Financially Sustainable Food Hub Operations