



FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE – April 3, 2025

Contact: Anthony M. Tamez

Phone: 312.632.8325

Email: anthony@chicagofoodpolicy.com

Local Farms and Food Businesses Receive \$670,000 in Grants to Help Make Metro Chicago Food System More Equitable

CHICAGO – The Chicago Food Policy Action Council and Cook County Department of Public Health (CCDPH) today announced the awardees of the second annual Metro Chicago Good Food Purchasing Initiative (GFPI) Community Fund. The groups awarded \$670,000 in grants to advance equity in the local food system by funding underserved farmers and food entrepreneurs within 250 miles of Chicago to increase community food access that builds local economies, sustainable practices, fair labor, animal welfare, and nutrition.

Fifteen local farms and food businesses in the Metro Chicago area were selected from among 114 applicants to receive grants ranging from \$40,000 to \$80,000 each. These small food businesses will receive technical assistance to support increasing locally-sourced produce and food products aligned with the [Good Food Purchasing Program](#) (GFPP) and provide opportunities to sell food to large public and private institutions, such as healthcare systems, and community meal sites, such as food pantries and schools.

“These grants directly support local farmers and food entrepreneurs, giving them resources to grow their businesses and strengthen communities across Cook County,” said Cook County Board President Toni Preckwinkle. “By investing in our local food system, we’re promoting economic equity, improving access to nutritious food and building a healthier future for everyone.”

CCDPH awarded to the GFPI Community Fund nearly \$400,000 in American Rescue Plan Act (ARPA) dollars received from Cook County Government to benefit seven of the 15 grant recipients based and operating in suburban Cook County. Other contributors to the community fund include The Rockefeller Foundation and the Builder’s Initiative.

“The long-term goal of the fund is to be less transactional and more focused on relationship and community-building,” said Kaitlyn Poindexter, Community Fund Program Manager at Chicago Food Policy Action Council. “The awardees also have

plans and aspirations for developing collaborative relationships with other mission-aligned farms and food businesses in the Metro Chicago food system.”

“The Rockefeller Foundation is honored to support the GFPI Community Fund and its mission to help residents get good food on their plates and create a more resilient regional food system across Metro Chicago,” said Alexandra Payne, Program Officer, The Rockefeller Foundation. “This fund helps small and mid-sized farmers and food producers unlock access to institutional markets—ensuring that healthier, locally grown food reaches more Chicagoans, and specifically students, while strengthening the regional economy.”

In 2018, the Cook County Board of Commissioners approved a resolution in support of the GFPP, a nationally recognized procurement strategy aimed at creating a more just, healthy, sustainable, humane, and local food system. In partnership with the Chicago Food Policy Action Council, CCDPH is charged with implementing the [GFPP in Cook County](#), a metric-based, flexible framework, to shift the foods purchased and served at Cook County institutions, like Cook County Health, Cook County Jail and Juvenile Temporary Detention Center in alignment with GFPP values.

“Advancing Cook County’s GFPP is a step toward building our resiliency by generating economic opportunities for local food producers and businesses, ensuring safe and fair working conditions for food producers, and providing access to healthier food options for those we serve,” said Amy O’Rourke, CCDPH director of Chronic Disease Prevention and Control.

The grants support a variety of projects aimed at increasing the amount of locally-sourced produce and food products at large institutions from diverse small- to mid-sized food businesses that embrace GFPP values. Such values include the fair treatment of workers, humane treatment of animals and reduction of the carbon footprint.

The selected grantees are working on initiatives that include expanding food hubs, establishing new partnerships with local community institutions, and building out large infrastructure projects to increase their capacity to serve the Metro Chicago area.

The 2024 grant recipients are:

- Adelante Center for Entrepreneurship - West Garfield Park, Chicago, IL
- ChiFresh Kitchen, LWCA - Greater Grand Crossing, Chicago, IL
- Brownstone Farms (and St. Anne Woods Growers Collective) - Pembroke Township and St. Anne Woods, IL

- Six-cess Foods, LWCA - Greater Grand Crossing, Chicago, IL
- Citadelle Green Mountain - Auburn Gresham, Chicago, IL
- Evanston Grows - Evanston, IL
- Food Hero L3C - Little Village, Chicago, IL
- Southside Market and Cafe Cooperative- Chatham, Chicago, IL
- Chicago Urban Farm Solutions LLC - Lynwood, IL
- Just Roots Chicago at It Takes A Village Community Farm - Sauk Village, IL
- Real Foods Collective - Maywood, IL
- Hope Center - Blue Island, IL
- Mother Carr's Farm - Lynwood, IL
- Roots, Eggs, & Greens at CoGro Biodynamic Growers - Chicago Heights, IL
- Urban Growers Collective - Chicago Heights, IL

For descriptions of the projects grant recipients will implement, click here [HERE](#).

About Chicago Food Policy Action Council:

[Chicago Food Policy Action Council](#) is a nonprofit organization that co-develops, facilitates, advocates for and supports implementation of policies that advance food justice and food sovereignty in Chicago and across the region. It aims to dismantle systemic racism in the food system.

About Cook County Department of Public Health:

[Cook County Department of Public Health](#) is the state-certified public health agency serving 2.3 million residents in suburban Cook County. The agency enforces health regulations, monitors and responds to public health threats and promotes better health for residents.

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