

Request for Proposal (RFP) for La Plata County Food System Plan with Policy and Regulatory Landscape Assessment

Good Food Collective
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11/12/2023

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Purpose

The Good Food Collective is seeking proposals from qualified individuals or organizations to develop a comprehensive County Food System Plan, including a landscape assessment of policy and regulatory options for La Plata County, Colorado. This plan will provide a roadmap for addressing food insecurity, promoting sustainable agriculture, and improving access to healthy, locally sourced food within our community, while also considering relevant policies, regulations, and related infrastructure. We are eager to work with individuals/group whose plan focuses on engaging existing community and organizational leadership and who approach their work with a commitment towards Equity, Inclusion, Diversity, and Justice. We invite all interested and qualified consultants to submit their proposals for consideration.

Background

The Good Food Collective was established in 2018 and operates under the fiscal agency of Onward! A Legacy Foundation. Our mission is to bring together stakeholders from across Southwest Colorado to collectively build a more resilient and just regional food system. Our foodshed and thus our service territory encompass La Plata, Montezuma, Dolores, San Juan, and Archuleta Counties, as well as, the Ute Mountain Ute and Southern Ute Tribal nations. To advance our mission, the Good Food Collective works with over 80 partners across our region on intersectional initiatives that seek systems-level shifts in the agricultural, distribution, infrastructure, food access, food business, and health equity spheres.

In 2023, the Good Food Collective was awarded a Social Impact grant from the La Plata County Board of Commissioners to generate a county-level, comprehensive community food plan. The goal of this collective impact effort is that it will provide a shared vision and direction, as well as, policy, planning, and regulatory priorities for all government and food security stakeholders so as to move strategically and effectively towards a Food Secure La Plata County.

Overview of La Plata County

La Plata County is located in the Southwestern Corner of Colorado and is both remote and semi-rural in nature. The County is situated at the intersection of the high desert and the San Juan Mountains at elevations ranging from 5856' to 13,914' feet. As of the 2020 census, the County houses approximately 55,000 residents and covers 1700 square miles of territory. The Southern Ute Nation lies within the County's boundaries and its largest population centers are Durango (19,058), Bayfield (2,839), and Ignacio (852). The area saw an economic boom in the 1970's with the discovery of natural gas, which has decreased over time but still plays a significant role in the economy. The area has seen a steady increase in population since the 1990's, when people first began to move to the area for its outdoor access and high quality of life. Core economic sectors in the region include tourism (27%), Regional Services (20%), and Agribusiness (7%).

Food Security In La Plata County

Food Insecurity is an ongoing and growing problem in La Plata County. Pre-COVID estimates suggest that 9.1% of La Plata County residents were food insecure, with a 2021 projected increase to 11.4%. Anecdotally, in monthly Food Assistance Provider meetings, emergency food assistance providers continue to report ever increasing user numbers. Within these numbers, food insecurity disproportionately impacts certain populations. In its 2020 county-wide assessment of secondary data and on the ground interviews, the La Plata Food Equity Coalition determined that our BIPOC, Senior, and Rural Residents experience food insecurity and its impacts at a much higher rate than their peers¹. In 2021, 18% of Hispanic residents of La Plata County identified themselves as food insecure compared to

¹ 2020 La Plata Food Equity Coalition Community Assessment Findings, page 17-21:
https://drive.google.com/file/d/1uO5FpzbJZNSw84NZgqI4COvsZtGUzAVz/view?usp=share_link

6% of non-Hispanic La Plata County residents. In 2022, 21.52% of Manna Soup Kitchen guests identify as Native American, though only 7.7% of LPC residents identified as Native American in the 2021 Census².

Social Determinants³ are the primary drivers of Food Insecurity in La Plata County -- A high cost of living and low wages compounded by inflationary pressures place stressors on food budgets. As an example, in 2022, 9% of the jobs in La Plata County are in the Accommodation and Food Sector which earn an average of \$22,935; 3% of jobs are in agriculture which earns an average of \$33,862 annually⁴. With a living wage of \$86,196 for a family of four⁵, those individuals most involved in supporting the food security of our county are also those that are the most challenged to obtain it. Unfortunately, many of these same individuals earn 'too much' to receive government benefits -- an estimated 34% of food insecure residents in La Plata County do NOT qualify for SNAP ('food stamps') or other federal nutrition programs⁶ and rely almost entirely on charitable response or self sufficiency measures.

Beyond our county's high cost of living relative to earning potential, additional drivers of food insecurity include the following:

- Food Skills: *Skills and knowledge needed to prepare foods*
 - Lack of access to cooking and/or food storage facilities within our most impacted communities
 - Lack of understanding of what constitutes 'healthy food', but desire to know more
 - Lack of time to prepare foods
 - Lack of knowledge of how to prepare food, but desire to learn
- Food Values: *Underlying values that inform someone's relationship with food*
 - Food is not a fixed cost and residents with limited budgets will choose affordability over healthy foods
 - Deep desire for choice and agency in how one accesses their food
 - Desire to practice agricultural traditions and produce one's own food
 - Desire for foods that align with cultural preferences
 - Desire for healthy foods⁷
 - Stigma around utilizing food assistance

² Manna Soup Kitchen EmPower report and 2021 US Census
<https://www.census.gov/quickfacts/laplatacountycolorado>

³ Social determinants of health (SDOH) are the conditions in the environments where people are born, live, learn, work, play, worship, and age that affect a wide range of health, functioning, and quality-of-life outcomes and risks

⁴ Region 9 2022 Economic Snap Shot, La Plata County
https://www.region9edd.org/uploads/Economic_Snapshot_2022.pdf

⁵ Region 9 2022 Livable Wage Report, La Plata County
https://www.region9edd.org/uploads/Final_Report_Livable_Wages_in_.pdf

⁶ Feeding America, <https://map.feedingamerica.org/county/2020/overall/colorado/county/la-plata>

⁷ In May 2021, Parent Leaders and community members from La PLata communities of color named their principal health concerns as obesity, diabetes and stress, leading to other chronic health complications. They identified activities centered around growing healthy nutritious food, processing that into healthy food options and ready made meals, and selling/distributing that within their community as the highest priority to address these concerns -2021 La Plata Family Center Coalition Report

- Food Environment: *The types of foods and beverages available in the settings where people spend time" (this can include schools, childcare, work, out in the community, parks, government buildings, commercial intersections, etc)*
 - Affordability - Healthy foods are less affordable than 'cheap calories'
 - Product Availability - lack of culturally relevant products in retail or food assistance spaces; lack of healthy foods in food assistance spaces
 - Accessibility - lack of access and information to social service programs; lack of language justice support; lack of transportation options to/from food access points
 - Location & Hours - Lack of grocery options in rural and/or low income areas; mismatch of retail and food assistance hours with residents on hourly schedules
 - Inhospitable environments -- Experience of racism or ADA noncompliance
 - Lack of childcare options that support child nutrition
- Food Infrastructure: *The community assets in place to help or hinder food access*
 - Farmland is not affordable nor accessible
 - We produce far less food locally than there is demand
 - External supply chains that provide the majority of our county's food have become increasingly unreliable
 - Lack of accessible processing and storage facilities for agricultural products or food businesses
 - Inadequate array of policies to support healthy, fair, affordable, and resilient local food system
- Food Sovereignty - Sense of Power, Belonging, Agency: *Perception of whether or not someone is part of the food system*
 - Representation: Leadership is predominantly white, urban, middle to upper class;
 - Lack of BIPOC-led food businesses, farmers, and food and opportunities for entrepreneurship and wealth
 - Language access is limited primarily to English speakers
 - Don't feel 'part of' the system nor power to make change [Provide a brief overview of your organization's mission and the community's current food-related challenges.]

Objectives

The objectives of the La Plata County Food Systems Plan are as follows:

1. To assess the current state of the local food system, including food production, distribution, and consumption patterns.
2. To identify existing barriers to food access, particularly for vulnerable and underserved populations.
3. To develop a strategy for improving access to healthy, affordable, and culturally appropriate food

4. To promote sustainable and regenerative agricultural practices within the community, aligning with local and regional policies.
5. To assess local policy and regulatory landscape and make recommendations for changes and additions that would improve our La Plata County food security.
6. To enhance food education and literacy programs that adhere to educational policies.
7. To foster collaboration among local stakeholders, including farmers, retailers, nonprofits, agencies, and county and municipal governments, while considering regulatory frameworks.
8. To create a Road Map for a resilient and equitable La Plata County food system in a manner that encourages widespread buy-in and multi-stakeholder commitment to implementation.

Scope of Work

The selected consultant will be responsible for:

1. Conduct comprehensive, multi-faceted community food assessment, including data collection, surveys, stakeholder interviews, site visits, policy audit, and background research
2. Providing an overview of how food moves through the La Plata County food system with particular focus on outlining food sourcing, as well as, food access for low-income and/or food insecure households. The analyses should draw on quantitative data from a variety of sources and explore elements like retail availability/sales, food distribution/cost/transportation, consumer choices/preferences/behavior, eligibility/utilization/impact of large-scale food access resources like SNAP, WIC, school meals, summer meals, etc.
3. Identifying those populations and/or geographic areas most affected by food insecurity.
4. Assessing the policy and regulatory landscape relevant to the local food system. Provide advice on how to improve implementation/impact of existing policies/programs along with recommendations on new policies to consider.
5. Developing strategies and action plans that consider and/or align with and, where necessary, recommend changes to existing policies and regulations.
6. Engaging with community members, local organizations, and businesses to gather input and build partnerships. Emphasis should be placed on engaging those individuals and entities most impacted by food system inequities, utilizing the support of the Good Food Collective and partner organizations.
7. Creating a comprehensive La Plata County Food System Plan that outlines specific goals, objectives, recommended activities, and suggested policy or regulatory changes for local government, organizations, and the private sector.
8. 7. Providing a clear timeline and budget for the plan's implementation, factoring in potential regulatory or policy changes.
9. 8. Preparing a final report and presentation for our organization and community stakeholders. Report and presentation will be made available in both English and Spanish.

Maximum Award:

- Maximum award available is \$95,000

Proposal Format

Your application should include the following items and be submitted as an attachment, ideally in .pdf format:

- Date of Submission
- Application Title
- Your Name/Your Organization's Name
- Point of Contact
- Contact Information
- Project Narrative **not to exceed five pages** of text that answers the following questions. Please draft your responses in whatever format best conveys your response (ex. A table, narrative, bullet points, etc):
 - 1. Describe any relevant experience/expertise that will inform and support your work on this project(s)
 - 2. Describe your experience engaging rural and diverse populations. Include the behaviors, attitudes, policies, structures, and methods that you employ to work on a cross-cultural basis.
 - 3. Provide a roster of personnel who will work on this project(s). Include brief descriptions of their applicable experience, how they will contribute to the project and how much of their time they will contribute to the project in the next six months.
 - 4. Please describe your approach for how you will achieve the outcomes and deliverables for this project(s)? Be sure to:
 - Describe how you will work in partnership with Good Food Collective staff and our partner organizations to ensure that your proposed scope of work and work plan aligns with their interests and needs.
 - Describe the community engagement strategies you will employ to ensure that those residents most impacted by food system inequities (BIPOC, Rural & Frontier, Immigrant, and Senior) are included in your assessment and plan development.
 - Describe how you will use language access measures to connect with our Spanish speaking residents
 - Describe the challenges you anticipate in working on this project(s) and how you might mitigate those challenges.
 - Provide a timeline including specific deliverables.
- References: Please list the names, affiliation, phone numbers, and email addresses of three references who are able to address relevant experience working with you/your organization.
- Financial Management and Budget: Please provide a line item budget for anticipated project costs (Personnel, contractors, travel, etc). Include a brief budget narrative. The budget and budget narrative will not be included in the page count limit.

Proposal Submission

Interested consultants or organizations are invited to submit their proposals by 12/23/23 at 8pm MST. Proposals should be sent to Rachel Landis, Good Food Collective Executive Director at rachel@goodfoodcollective.org

Evaluation Criteria

Proposals will be evaluated based on the following criteria:

1. Experience and expertise in developing community food plans, including policy and regulatory assessments.
2. Understanding of the local context and the ability to address the community's unique challenges.
3. Clarity and comprehensiveness of the proposed approach, including the policy and regulatory assessment.
4. Demonstrated ability to engage with diverse stakeholders and build partnerships.
5. Budget and cost-effectiveness, with consideration of potential policy or regulatory changes.
6. References and past project performance.

Timeline

- RFP Issuance Date: 11/13/23
- Proposal Submission Deadline: 1/1/24 at 8am MST
- Possible Interviews: Week of January 8th
- Consultant Selection: Week of January 22nd
- Project Commencement: February 5th
- Contract Term - 7 to 11 months. All work and deliverables must be completed by December 13th, 2024

Contact Information

For questions or clarifications related to this RFP, please contact Rachel Landis at rachel@goodfoodcollective.org or 970-403-5347.

We look forward to receiving your proposals and working together to create a more resilient and equitable local food system, with a keen focus on relevant policy and regulatory considerations, for our community.

Sincerely,

Rachel Landis
Executive Director
Good Food Collective