

City of Madison: Announces new Healthy Community Food Systems Fund

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In the face of rising food security brought on by the economic fallout of the COVID-19 pandemic, Mayor Satya Rhodes-Conway, policymakers on the Common Council, City staff, and members of the Madison Food Policy Council have created the 2021 Healthy Community Food Systems Fund, which seeks to assist in addressing food access and security issues in the City of Madison.

“In addition to the public health crisis we are currently experiencing, COVID-19 has created a deeply unequal economic crisis in many communities, with our hospitality sector – and especially the workers in our food service sector – facing the financial strain of reduced hours, layoffs, and uncertainty around federal assistance to pay for necessities such as housing, food, and utilities”, states Mayor Satya Rhodes-Conway. “Data also shows that food insecurity as a whole has increased by 13% in the United States during the COVID-19 pandemic, and in households with children that number has increased by even more – to 16%. These numbers are disturbing and through the Healthy Community Food Systems Fund, the City is able to provide some relief to our residents and business owners who are struggling just to make ends meet.”

By strategically re-allocating \$268,000 in existing funding from the 2020 budget, the Mayor and policymakers were able to create and provide funding for three distinct fund components:

(1) Community Food Access Competitive Grants Program The Community Food Access Competitive Grants Program has a total budget of \$150,000, with individual maximum grant awards of \$25,000. Through this program the City is building on

and expanding the scale of the popular SEED grants, which since their creation in 2014 have disbursed \$350,000 to over 60 community-based organizations working on food access, security, and education issues. The Madison Food Policy Council is encouraging any organization, group, or agency that is devoted to making food more accessible to City of Madison residents to apply. Applications that focus on COVID-19 food security/access response will be prioritized during the review process. Applications are due Friday, January 29, 2021 at 5:00 PM and should be submitted to George Reistad, Food Policy Director, at mfpc@cityofmadison.com

(2) Rapid Food Access – Food Entrepreneur Support Program The Rapid Food Access – Food Entrepreneur Support Program has a total budget of \$100,000. This program is focused on quickly supporting efforts within the City that combine the dual goals of (1) feeding hungry residents in need and (2) supporting food businesses and entrepreneurs who are struggling immensely right now because of the effects of COVID and the drastic fall in demand for congregate meal service at restaurants and events. On December 7, 2020 the Madison Food Policy Council authorized two \$50,000 contracts to support Cook it Forward and Northside Planning Council's FEED to Go Program to continue their community feeding programs, which are procuring meals from Madison restaurants and a diverse cohort of vendors at FEED Kitchens.

(3) Funding Support for a Regional Food Systems Planning Process Through the Healthy Community Food Systems Fund, \$18,000 was allocated to support a regional food systems planning process, which will culminate in a plan that establishes a blueprint for food systems needs in the Greater Madison area focused on recovery and resiliency. Staff of the Madison Food Policy Council and Dane County Food Council are currently collaborating with City and County Planning Departments to discuss strategies on how to move forward with this process and establish a work plan and implementation timeline.