

Request for Proposals

Consultant to Lead a Request for Application Process for Lake Michigan School Food Systems Innovation Hub

Introduction: The United States Department of Agriculture (USDA) School Food System Transformation Challenge seeks to transform school food systems through innovative practices that increase student access to healthy meals. Led by the Illinois Public Health Institute (IPHI), the Lake Michigan School Food Systems Innovation Hub (Innovation Hub) will implement the USDA Challenge to spark innovation and strengthen the Lake Michigan K-12 food system to improve schools' access to nutritious, local, and culturally relevant products in Illinois, Michigan, Northern Indiana, and Wisconsin. As part of this initiative, IPHI is seeking proposals from qualified consultants to support the development of a Sub-Grantee Request for Application (RFA) process and materials. The consultant will support IPHI and partners in developing an innovative and user-friendly grant application and accompanying materials.

Proposals for the Sub-Grantee Request for Application (RFA) Development and Support Consultant are due by May 25th, 2023, 5:00pm CT, and should be submitted to janna.simon@iphionline.org with the subject "Innovation Hub RFA Consultant Proposal."

Project Background: The partners leading the Lake Michigan School Food Systems Innovation Hub will collectively identify and make awards to local and regional collaboratives to strengthen and adapt the food system to enable schools to serve their students culturally relevant, delicious foods that align with current USDA Transitional Standards, as well as future meal pattern iterations. Collaboratives of schools/school districts, food producers, suppliers, distributors, and their community partners will receive tailored training and technical assistance from Innovation Hub partners to support innovations, especially around food production and supply chains, to create a more resilient and equitable food system from which schools and students can benefit. With IPHI leading the grant administration and sub-granting process, a State Lead organization from each state will support training and technical assistance to innovative collaboratives in their states to implement these programs. The project prioritizes inclusion of socially and economically disadvantaged farmers, food producers, and food industry partners and on advancing innovation in communities with lower incomes, communities of color, rural communities, Tribal communities and other historically disadvantaged communities.

For the Innovation Hub projects, sub-grants will be given out to collaboratives in two ways: Spark Awards will be provided annually to support smaller projects that need less support and/or less time to realize. Launch of the first round of Spark Awards is anticipated in the fall of 2023. In early 2024, larger, multi-year Innovation Collaborative awards will be provided for larger/longer projects. The consultant will assist IPHI and partners to develop two Request for Applications, one for the Spark Awards and one for the Innovation Collaborative Awards that

meet the unique needs of each sub-grant opportunity while maintaining similar processes, procedures, etc.

Scope of Work: The RFA Development Consultant will be responsible for the following scope of work:

- Lead meetings with Innovation Hub partners and USDA FNS to develop the request for applications (RFA) requirements, selection criteria, application questions and corresponding scoring system, timeline for release, and outreach and overview language to reach and resonate with priority audiences. The application process should meet all USDA requirements while also ensuring ease of participation for potential applicants, helping to reduce barriers to accessing funding for historically disadvantaged organizations/communities. Planning meetings should be based on inclusive facilitation and meeting design, with consensus building as the goal.
- Must be willing to attend virtual meetings and at least one in-person planning meeting in the Chicagoland area (anticipated for early September 2023).
- Create the Request for Applications for Spark Awards by August 31st, 2023.
- Create the Request for Applications for Innovation Collaborative Awards by November 15th, 2023.
- Create templates and materials to support potential applicants in responding to the Spark Awards and Innovation Collaboratives RFAs (e.g., workplan and budget development templates).
- Host and record a short grant-writing training for all potential applicants.
- Offer office hours to support potential applicants to develop their applications.
- Create the scoring template for use by grant application reviewers.
- Participate in a monthly check-in call with IPHI to report on progress, etc. Ongoing through October 2023.
- Submit mid-point and final written report on workplan progress. Ongoing through October 2023.

Timeline:

The project runs from June 1st, 2023 through March 30th, 2024, with the following deadlines:

- Design and facilitate RFA development planning meetings; Focus on Spark awards through July 31, 2023 (virtual meetings) and then Innovation Collaborative awards by October 15, 2023 (in-person and virtual meetings, as needed).
- August 31st: Finalize Spark Award RFA and corresponding materials
- September 30th: Host grant-writing training
- September 15th – October 30th: Offer office hours for Spark Award potential applicants
- September 30th: Create applications scoring template for Spark Awards
- November 15th: Finalize Innovation Collaborative Award RFA and corresponding materials

- November 30th: Create application scoring template for Innovation Collaborative Awards
- December 1st 2023 - January 31st, 2024: Offer office hours for Innovation Collaborative Award potential applicants
- Ongoing through March 2024: Participate in check-in calls and submit written reports.

Preference:

- Preference will be given to contractors that meet the USDA definition of economically and socially disadvantaged:
 - Small businesses owned by individuals that have faced barriers to access to the capital, markets, and networks they need to grow their businesses because of certain statuses or membership in certain groups, including membership in a group that has been subjected to racial or ethnic prejudice or cultural bias within American society and;
 - Small businesses in Community Development Financial Institution Investment Areas, which are generally low-income, high-poverty geographies that receive insufficient support for the needs of small businesses, including minority-owned businesses.
- Preference will be given to vendors certified as Minority Business Enterprise (MBE) or Women Business Enterprise (WBE) in the Cook County or Chicago MBE/WBE system.
- Preference will be given to consultants that have some understanding of the Lake Michigan K-12 food system and the challenges faced by schools, farmers, producers, suppliers, distributors, and community partners.
- Preference will be given to consultants that have experience engaging diverse partners, including people with lived experience as historically disadvantaged organizations/communities, in inclusive meeting design and facilitation.

Budget: Up to \$45,000

Proposal Information:

Proposals should include the following information and should be no longer than five pages:

- Interest in working on this project.
- Proposed approach, methodology, and timeline for fulfilling the scope of work.
- A description of relevant experience and qualifications. The proposal should also provide information on the qualifications of the team members who will be working on the project, including their education and experience.
- A budget for the proposed work, including hourly rate and estimated number of hours for each task.
- Examples of relevant previous work and references from previous clients. The proposal should provide at least two references from previous clients.

- Information about alignment with one or more preferences, detailed above, if applicable.

Qualifications:

- Demonstrated ability to create an RFA and accompanying supports that align with the goals and objectives of the Innovation Hub.
- Commitment to meeting the project's goals and objectives within the allocated budget and timeline.
- Preference for contractors that align with preferences, detailed above.

Submission:

Proposals and/or questions for the Sub-Grantee Request for Application (RFA) Development and Support Consultant are due by May 25th, 2023, 5:00pm CT, and should be submitted to janna.simon@iphionline.org with the subject "Innovation Hub RFA Consultant Proposal." IPHI may conduct interviews with firms prior to making a final selection. We look forward to receiving your proposal.

USDA Nondiscrimination Statement and Attribution

In accordance with Federal civil rights law and U.S. Department of Agriculture (USDA) civil rights regulations and policies, the USDA, its Agencies, offices, and employees, and institutions participating in or administering USDA programs are prohibited from discriminating based on race, color, national origin, religion, sex, gender identity (including gender expression), sexual orientation, disability, age, marital status, family/parental status, income derived from a public assistance program, political beliefs, or reprisal or retaliation for prior civil rights activity, in any program or activity conducted or funded by USDA (not all bases apply to all programs). Remedies and complaint filing deadlines vary by program or incident.

Persons with disabilities who require alternative means of communication for program information (e.g., Braille, large print, audiotope, American Sign Language, etc.) should contact the responsible Agency or USDA's TARGET Center at (202) 720-2600 (voice and TTY) or contact USDA through the Federal Relay Service at (800) 877-8339. Additionally, program information may be made available in languages other than English.

To file a program discrimination complaint, complete the USDA Program Discrimination Complaint Form, AD-3027, found online at [How to File a Program Discrimination Complaint](#) and at any USDA office or write a letter addressed to USDA and provide in the letter all of the information requested in the form. To request a copy of the complaint form, call (866) 632-9992. Submit your completed form or letter to USDA by: (1) mail: U.S. Department of Agriculture, Office of the Assistant Secretary for Civil Rights, 1400 Independence Avenue, SW, Washington, D.C. 20250-9410; (2) fax: (202) 690-7442; or (3) email: program.intake@usda.gov.

USDA is an equal opportunity provider, employer, and lender.

This project has been funded at least in part with Federal funds from the U.S. Department of Agriculture. The contents of this publication do not necessarily reflect the view or policies of the U.S. Department of Agriculture, nor does mention of trade names, commercial products, or organizations imply endorsement by the U.S. Government.