

Growing Justice 2024 Request for Proposals

Growing Justice Fund is a pooled fund that invests in efforts to solidify the leadership, dignity, and power of Tribal, Indigenous, Black, Latinx, Asian, and immigrant people to identify and drive solutions that expand the market for good food from locally- or regionally-owned, and environmentally- and economically-sustainable farms, ranches, fisheries, and food businesses. It believes that community-serving institutions that participate in large-volume food purchasing, such as schools, hospitals, and early childhood and elder care centers, can serve as anchor markets that drive revenue to underserved food and farm businesses and support wealth-building in their communities.

The Vision

Growing Justice envisions a future in which Tribal, Indigenous, Black, Latinx, Asian, and immigrant people (BIPOC+) engaged in food markets as suppliers, producers, distributors, workers, and eaters at community-serving institutions are economically and physically thriving thanks in part to efforts by community-serving institutions to prioritize equitable good food procurement, and are able to access larger percentages of food buying revenue. This fund is designed to support the marginalized sector's entry into large-scale procurement opportunities, helping them gain economic viability and equitable access to opportunities.

Equitable Good Food Procurement is the purchasing of good food from locally or regionally owned, environmentally and economically sustainable farms, ranches, fisheries, and food businesses that prioritize the needs of low-income communities of color and treat workers with dignity.

Good Food is affordable, nutritious, and culturally appropriate. It supports physical, economic, and community health, regenerates and respects natural resources and animals, and ensures that all people engaged in the value chain live with dignity and freedom from oppression and exploitation.

Food Value Chain refers to the people working in partnership to produce, distribute, and procure raw or value-added foods. It includes farmers, ranchers, fishers, suppliers, producers, food hubs, distributors, cooperatives, front-line food workers, organizers, advocacy groups, and the assistance groups that support them. It also includes large institutions—such as schools, agencies, and hospitals—that purchase food.



Community-Serving Institutions refer to large organizations that procure substantial volumes of food and related products to serve their communities. These include, but are not limited to, public and private institutions such as schools, universities, hospitals, early childhood education centers, elder care centers, and government agencies (e.g., municipal, county, and Tribal government entities). These institutions serve as anchor markets with significant purchasing power to drive revenue to food and farm businesses and support wealth-building within marginalized communities.

The Problem

Community-serving institutions spend billions of dollars annually procuring food for the communities they serve.

However, small farmers, fishers, ranchers, and others working in the food value chain—especially those from historically marginalized communities, including BIPOC+ communities—face a persistent equity gap in resources, experience, and access to capital required to secure institutional purchasing contracts.

This initiative aims to address those disparities, ensuring that local, high-quality produce, products, and services from these communities can effectively enter the institutional procurement system. Importantly, it also acknowledges the non-monetized foodways of culturally intact communities, respecting how procurement is viewed not just as a business venture but as a means to restore health, culture, and land-based traditions.

By bridging these gaps and investing in both monetized and non-monetized systems, this work aims to reshape institutional procurement to be more inclusive and equitable, ensuring that historically marginalized communities are positioned as key players in feeding their own communities and beyond.

Funding Opportunity Announcement

Awards of \$25,000 to \$250,000 are available to support community leaders working to advance the Growing Justice vision through **Planning** and **Implementation Grants**.

Growing Justice Fund supports community organizations working in any of the following three areas:

(1) Building Infrastructure for good food procurement. Support for BIPOC+ good food producers, manufacturers, aggregators, small processors, and distributors to enter the institutional market and/or expand their business with institutions. These entities should be dedicated to specific community-serving institutions. Some examples of this work include:



- Supporting formal partnerships between small BIPOC+ producers to aggregate products, enabling them to scale up and secure larger institutional contracts. These collaborations help producers overcome individual limitations and collectively meet institutional demands.
- Providing targeted support to BIPOC+ farmer collaborations to navigate and obtain necessary certifications, such as food safety standards, which are often barriers to entry in institutional procurement markets.
- Investing in infrastructure such as food hubs, which play a critical role in connecting BIPOC+ farmers, processors, and social entrepreneurs with institutional markets. These hubs create the logistical backbone for aggregating, processing, and distributing local, high-quality foods.
- Empowering farm and food chain workers from marginalized communities by supporting worker-ownership initiatives and cooperatives, fostering equity and leadership in advancing good food procurement at institutional levels.
- Offering tools, resources, and technical training to help BIPOC+ producers and food businesses prepare for institutional procurement systems. This includes providing support in food safety certification, insurance, acquiring essential equipment, transportation, refrigeration, and other services critical for scaling their operations and meeting institutional needs.

(2) Building policy action through grassroots organizing and advocacy for good food

procurement. Support for community coalitions and organizations that build power to engage institutions and governments to pass policy initiatives that include commitments to good food procurement and legal parameters for an institution or jurisdiction's good food procurement priorities. Some examples include:

- Creation or growth of local, state, or Tribal coalitions and/or organizations with the explicit purpose of advancing government policies to establish good food procurement in specific institutions, such as:
 - Building community-led campaigns to shift food procurement policies with local school districts toward sourcing from local, sustainable, and socially responsible producers.
 - Engaging municipal governments to adopt food procurement guidelines that prioritize environmentally sustainable, ethically produced, and regionally sourced food.
- Organizing workers or other value chain actors to demand fair and equitable practices in institutional food supply chains.
- Providing training and resources to institutional administrators and staff responsible for implementing good food procurement policies, ensuring they have the tools and knowledge to align purchasing practices with equitable and sustainable food system goals.
- Providing evidence and messaging of good food purchasing's social and environmental impact for use by public and policy campaigns.



(3) Cultivating Traditional Food Pathways to build community wealth within Tribal Nations.

Support for inter- and intra-Nation work, including within Tribal Nations and across Tribal Nations, to increase food production and distribution for their direct communities, as well as distribution efforts to non-Tribal institutions serving Tribal and native peoples. Examples include:

- Investing in Tribal Nation producers to provide more food to their community through their Tribal government or other community institutions;
- Collaborating across Tribal Nations to establish regional food hubs that facilitate sharing resources, knowledge, and distribution infrastructure to increase food sovereignty and access.
- Supporting inter-Tribal partnerships for seed-saving initiatives and traditional food preservation techniques to enhance local food production and cultural foodways.
- Creating alliances with non-Tribal institutions (schools, hospitals, etc.) to purchase and distribute Indigenous-produced foods and promote culturally relevant nutrition in those institutions.

Grant Types and Distinctions

Planning Grants

The Growing Justice Planning Grant is a **one-time award of up to \$25,000** intended to support the early stages of project development. It helps farmers, organizations, coalitions, and businesses develop comprehensive action plans for their initiatives, laying the groundwork for future implementation.

Key activities supported by Planning Grants include:

- **Strategic Research and Development:** Funding to explore opportunities, assess needs, and identify solutions to barriers in equitable food procurement.
- **Stakeholder Engagement:** Support for developing key relationships critical to the project's success.
- **Partnership Building:** Resources for formal collaborations across sectors, including producers, institutions, and advocacy groups.
- **Project Planning:** Assistance in creating detailed project plans, financial projections, and partnerships.
- **Organizational Development:** Strengthening leadership skills, securing technical expertise, and preparing for implementation.
- **Budget Development:** Guidance in creating a comprehensive budget using templates.



- **Feasibility Studies:** Conducting market analysis, resource mapping, and financial modeling to assess project viability.

By the end of the planning phase, grantees will have a well-defined project plan, partnerships, and deliverables, positioning them for future **Implementation Grants**.*

**Please note:* Receiving a planning grant does not guarantee an implementation grant, but it positions applicants to be more competitive and better prepared for success in future funding opportunities. The planning grant is a key step in building the groundwork for effective, community-driven initiatives that advance equitable food procurement and empower historically marginalized communities.

Implementation Grants

Implementation Grants are designed to support the full execution of projects aimed at advancing equitable food procurement and building infrastructure within the food system. These grants range from **\$50,000 to \$250,000** and are available to organizations with a clear project plan and existing partnerships ready to scale their initiatives.

Who Is Eligible to Apply?

Eligible applicants include community-led organizations, community-based organizations, Tribal Nations, or the instrumentalities of Tribal Nations, and other leaders that are:

- Led by people of color, people from historically disinvested and discriminated communities
- Actively engaged in a community coalition and/or partnership to advance good food purchasing practices and policies with institutions in the community
- Actively engaged in the food value chain and
- Committed to transforming the food system by:
 - Working together with other organizations in the food value chain or
 - Seeking to build partnerships with other organizations in the food value chain.

GROWING JUSTICE seeks to support organizations that have been active in the food value chain for at least the past two years* and organizations that have existing partnerships or aspire to build partnerships with others in the food value chain.



*While we encourage applicants with at least two years of engagement in the food value chain, this eligibility criterion is not required for planning grant applicants. The planning grant will be accessible to smaller organizations, emerging coalitions, and those in the process of movement-building.

Current Limitations

Please note that Growing Justice is *not* currently funding the following types of organizations:

- Organizations working on school gardens or community gardens as a source of food production
- Organizations working with food pantries or other charitable food entities as a means of distribution
- Projects that do not actively work to advance good food procurement through institutions or Tribal government
- Registered 501(c)(3) nonprofit or government equivalent. Eligible applicants must be recognized by the IRS as tax-exempt under Section 501(c)(3), government equivalent, or fiscally sponsored by a 501(c)(3) nonprofit entity.
- Organizations looking to distribute mini-grants to grantees

While we recognize the critical value these organizations often bring to their communities, the Growing Justice Fund is currently prioritizing work that catalyzes systemic change in the institutional food system and benefits producers and workers who rely on food production and distribution as a central aspect of their economic well-being.

Application Deadline: Friday, November 15th, 5 pm PT/8 pm ET

How to Apply

Grantseekers must complete the **Eligibility Quiz** to determine eligibility and receive an invitation to apply. If your organization is a fit based on your responses, you will be redirected to the application. Grantseekers are encouraged to complete the Eligibility Quiz by **Friday, November 8, 2024**, to allow ample time to apply. Grantseekers who have specific questions about their eligibility may submit their questions through the Eligibility Quiz and will receive a response within 1-2 business days.

