



Request for Proposals:

South Dakota Local Foods Coalition Food Systems Planner

The Opportunity

The South Dakota Local Foods Coalition (SDLFC) is seeking an experienced food systems planner to help lay the foundational democratic structure for its organization and to create its first multi-year strategic plan. These objectives will aid in the coalition's goals of long term sustainability, supporting the diverse needs of its stakeholders, and achieving its mission of creating a resilient food system in South Dakota. The hired consultant will work with the coalition's leadership team as well as the full coalition membership as needed to develop these deliverables. We invite all interested and qualified consultants to submit their proposals for consideration.

About the South Dakota Local Foods Coalition

The mission of the South Dakota Local Foods Coalition (SDLFC) is to promote resilient, equitable, local food systems and food sovereignty for all. The coalition's origins date back to 2010, when the organizing of the first annual South Dakota Local Foods Conference began. This remained the coalition's sole focus for the first 10 years. In response to the COVID-19 pandemic, as well as the broader need to have more coordinated efforts around state-wide food systems work, the coalition began actively organizing outside of the conference in 2020, and functions as we now know it. The SDLFC envisions sustainable food economies in South Dakota that are diverse, thriving, and equitable. The coalition works to strengthen local food systems by connecting stakeholders and amplifying their voices so that South Dakota producers, eaters, and environments thrive.

The SDLFC is composed of a diverse base of stakeholders, including non-profits, federal and Tribal governments, South Dakota State University, state agencies, and producers. The coalition is expanding to include more people who are committed to increasing institutional ties and self-organizing to promote local foods. The SDLFC creates subcommittees dedicated to working on priority areas as the coalition sees fit. These subcommittees currently include farm-to-school and conference planning. The coalition is directed by a leadership team typically comprised of the following officers: two co-chairs, a communications lead, and a membership & outreach lead. Meetings are held virtually for the full coalition membership bi-monthly, with subcommittee meetings encouraged monthly, or as needed based on their respective workloads. Subcommittee chairs organize all committee meetings and report out to the full coalition. Decision making for the coalition is handled democratically, with issues brought to the coalition's membership during meetings and put to a vote. The leadership team is authorized to make time-sensitive decisions with the mission and best interests of the coalition in mind.

In 2022, the SDLFC received a USDA Regional Food Systems Partnership planning grant to increase its capacity through a two-pronged approach: firstly, by mapping the landscape of local foods in South Dakota, and secondly, by solidifying the coalition's organizational structure and developing its first multi-year strategic

plan. The strengthening of the coalition's institutional capacity will allow it to continue to become more inclusive and amplify the priorities and needs of local producers, so that local food economies and rural food-based agrarian communities can thrive in South Dakota. Moving forward, the coalition hopes to impact the broader South Dakota food system, bringing forth policy change that amplifies the voices of its diverse local stakeholders, and focusing on a plan that puts South Dakota on the map for progressive food policies.

Lay of the Land

South Dakota is an agriculturally dominated landscape that has high levels of food insecurity and lack of supportive services for local food producers. Food insecurity is a significant problem in South Dakota, where 43 percent of school-aged children qualify for free and reduced meals, according to recent data from Feeding America, and food insecurity is increasing. Sixteen percent more households were food insecure in 2018 than in 2001, with the rate of very low food insecurity doubling to 4.8 percent. These numbers likely underestimate the prevalence of the problem. Feeding America predicted that food insecurity in South Dakota would increase to 16.3 percent in 2021, following the challenges from the COVID-19 pandemic. These trends are even worse for people in rural areas and on Native American reservations. Of the nine Tribal reservations in South Dakota, five are in counties that have over 22% food insecurity.

Not only are high rates of food insecurity in South Dakota driven by high poverty levels, the food system is unevenly distributed and food deserts¹, where people must travel more than 10 miles to purchase food, plague many rural residents. In South Dakota, approximately 31.9% of the state population lives in a food desert, with the mean distance to a supermarket being roughly 17.5 miles. This lack of equitable dispersal and access to food is not because South Dakota lacks agricultural production - in fact, South Dakota's number one industry is agriculture, generating nearly \$10 billion worth of agricultural products in 2017. The impact of local food production is less well known, but approximately one-third of producers in the state earned less than \$10,000 in the same year, suggesting that small-scale farms are common in South Dakota.

Even though South Dakota has opportunities to sell local food at their 45 farmer's markets across the state, they do not have sufficient institutional support to scale up small businesses and fortify local production. South Dakota lacks infrastructure to support local producers, especially as compared to other states in the region. For example, South Dakota is deficient in food hub services, which are crucial for small farms to grow and offer production, distribution, and marketing services. Despite their catalytic effects, South Dakota has only two fledgling food hubs in two corners of its 77,000 square miles. To increase the capacity of the food hubs we have and increase the number of them, we need a coalition of people working across the local food network on production, transportation, storage, and marketing.

Despite the economic importance of local foods and their potential to increase resilience in the food system, there has been limited coordinated effort in South Dakota to understand how local food systems operate. This may be due to the lack of elected official and state agency support; unlike other states in the Midwest, South Dakota does not have a designated state agency or committee to oversee or fund local food development. The state also lacks legislative mandates on local food production. Even though individual organizations are doing meaningful work, most of their efforts are siloed and there is competition for the limited funds available and the public's attention.

By reinforcing the SDLFC with effective leadership, democratic procedures for including socially disadvantaged voices, and committees that prioritize local needs, we can have an exponential effect on empowering producers and strengthening local food systems as compared to each organization working independently. The coalescing of diverse voices can raise social and public awareness, which can cement and elevate the economic and social contributions of local food producers. Additionally, working together in a coalition allows for people not to have to constantly reinvent the wheel, and leaders can lean on one another, which is critical to reduce burn out - a large problem identified during initial focus group interviews.

¹ The term *food desert*, which is used and defined by the USDA, is now recognized by many food justice scholars and communities to be more accurately called *food apartheid*, reflecting the underlying systems of oppression that create these areas along racial, ethnic, and class lines.

Scope of Work

The selected consultant, in partnership with a team of leaders from the coalition will lead the SDLFC in the following:

- 1) Create a multi-year strategic framework to guide the coalition's work
 - Analyze the current structure for membership, leadership, and decision making, and provide advice on how to refine and solidify structural processes.
 - Identify opportunities to build an equitable and diverse membership
 - Develop strategies and action plans that align with the mission of the coalition
 - Assess the policy and regulatory landscape relevant to the South Dakota local food system; provide guidance on how the coalition could improve existing policies/programs along with recommendations on new policies that the coalition should consider introducing
 - Providing a clear timeline and budget for the plan's implementation, factoring in potential obstacles
 - Examine the branding of the coalition, including name, logo, and communication/marketing efforts, both internal and external
 - Engage with community members, local organizations, producers, and relevant businesses to gather input and build membership. Emphasis should be placed on engaging those individuals and entities most impacted by food system inequities, utilizing the support of the coalition's existing relationships
- 2) Prepare a final report of findings for the coalition, including a timeline for suggested next steps

Budget

\$50,000

Proposal Requirements

- Contact information (Name, title, organization, address, phone, and email)
- Project Narrative, not to exceed 5 pages, including:
 - Your relevant experience and expertise that would bring success to this project
 - Your experience engaging rural and diverse populations, including the attitudes, policies, structures, and methods that you employ to work cross-culturally
 - Any other personnel who will be engaging in this project with you, including their applicable experience, how they will contribute to the project, and how much time they will contribute to the project
 - A description of your approach, including:
 - How you plan to work in partnership with the SDLFC to achieve a framework that aligns with their needs and goals
 - Your strategy for working with the various stakeholders involved
 - A timeline of activities to be undertaken that will help you achieve the project deliverables, and any key milestones to be achieved along the way
 - Any challenges you anticipate and how you might mitigate them
- References: Please list the names, affiliations, phone numbers, and email addresses of three professional references who are able to address relevant experiences working with you and/or your organization
- Budget
 - A brief budget narrative, as well as a line item budget including a breakdown of your time and travel expenses

Desired Qualifications

- Strong facilitation, communication, and collaboration skills
- Dedication to advancing racial equity and inclusivity in member-based organizations
- Experience working with small organizations

- Familiarity with regional food system organizing
- Experience guiding organizations in developing their strategic framework

Success Spectrum

The success spectrum helps to define what outcomes would look like at varying levels of success. Below are examples along the spectrum for this project with the South Dakota Local Foods Coalition.

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Epic success: Not only is leadership of the SDLFC clear about a strategic framework for the future, there is substantial buy-in from all members of the coalition. Membership increases over the next three years to include diverse groups and individuals, and subcommittees are recharged. The coalition is consistently building up new leaders to tackle various aspects of food systems work in South Dakota.

Target success: A clear strategic framework has been created and the leadership team and key members have a solid understanding of how to proceed. Stakeholders have an understanding of how to work in partnership for larger food systems advances.

Minimum success: The coalition has a strategic framework at the end of the process; understanding of processes for equity and inclusivity are the same as they currently are, and the foundational structure for the coalition remains the same.

Failure: The SDLFC is unchanged, any strategies or plans created have unclear timelines and little to no buy-in from members of the coalition. At large members and subcommittee participants are unclear about future directions for their work and how to impact change in the state.

Timeline

Proposals posted - Mar. 2nd

Deadline for proposal submissions - Mar. 29th, 11:59pm

Notification of decisions - Week of Apr. 15th

Project start date - May 1st

Project Term - 6 months

Contact Information

For any inquiries in advance of proposal submissions, please contact Charlie Saum at charlie@dakotarural.org.

Proposal Submission

Submit completed proposals using the form here:

<https://forms.gle/yhO9k8yAAiUnQk>