

VFAIF Grant Round – How to Submit a Pre-Proposal

The FY 2023 Virginia Food Access Investment Fund (VFAIF) pre-proposal window opens November 1 and closes December 16. To be considered for a VFAIF grant, potential applicants must submit a pre-proposal by the deadline. The Virginia Department of Agriculture and Consumer Services (VDACS) and Virginia Community Capital (VCC) staff will review the pre-proposals and will notify applicants by December 21 if they are invited to submit a full application. VDACS anticipates awards will be announced in the spring of 2023.

Important dates

- **November 1 to December 16** – Pre-proposal period is open.
 - **November 17** – VFAIF information webinar with Q&A period
 - **December 2** – VFAIF information webinar with Q&A period
- **December 21 - February 10** – Grant round is open for select applicants.
- **May 2023** – Award announcement

Steps to submit a Pre-Proposal

1. **Read the guidelines and determine if your project is eligible.** The VFAIF program has six *mandatory* criteria that a project must meet to be eligible for funding. Your project must:
 - ✓ have or will have a food retail component; and
 - ✓ accept or will accept SNAP/EBT; and
 - ✓ be informed by the community (this may be demonstrated through letters of support, interviews, etc.); and
 - ✓ improve food access in low-income, low-access communities;
 - ✓ have leadership made up of members of the community that is being served by the project; and
 - ✓ source or will source at least 25% of its fresh retail food from Virginia producers.

You can find project descriptions of past grant awardees on the VDACS website.

2. **Attend a VFAIF webinar (optional).** VDACS and VCC will host two webinars to share information on the VFAIF program and the principles of Equitable Food Oriented Development (EFOD). Time will be available at the end of the webinars to ask questions on the pre-proposal process. VDACS will not be scheduling individual calls to discuss potential projects.
3. **Complete the pre-proposal.** All potential applicants for the VFAIF grant must complete and submit the pre-proposal form. Once the pre-proposal window opens on November 1, directions on how to access Foundant will be posted on the VDACS website.

A successful pre-proposal will clearly explain how the project improves access to fresh food and satisfies the six mandatory requirements. Staff will also look for evidence of the applicant's connection to and knowledge of the community in which the project is proposed. Strong pre-proposals will identify the problem, give a concise description of the proposed solution, and explain how VFAIF funding will help. We would like to see an anticipated total project budget but will not need a detailed list of expenditures at this time. When planning your project, take into account that the likely start date of the two-year performance period is May 1, 2023.

4. **Applicants will be notified on December 21 if they are invited to submit a full application.** Please note, not all applicants who submit a pre-proposal will be invited to submit a full application to be considered for grant funding. Staff will review all pre-proposals and select the strongest projects to move forward.