

West Virginia Food and Farm Coalition, Inc.

Request for Proposals

Evaluative Case Study: West Virginia Food System Expansion Project

ARC POWER Award No. PW-21465-IM-23

Issued: April 8, 2026

Introduction and Purpose

The West Virginia Food and Farm Coalition, Inc. (WVFFC) is soliciting proposals from qualified individuals, firms, and institutions to conduct an evaluative case study of the WV Food System Expansion Project. This project is funded through an Appalachian Regional Commission (ARC) POWER grant (Award No. PW-21465-IM-23) and administered by WVFFC as the prime grantee.

The purpose of this case study is to document, analyze, and evaluate the project's model, impacts, and contributions to the development of mid-tier value chains within West Virginia's food, nutrition, and agriculture economy. The final product will serve as a resource for policymakers, funders, practitioners, and community stakeholders seeking to understand and replicate innovations in regional food system development.

About the Project

The WV Food System Expansion Project represents an innovative partnership among WVFFC, Project Healthy Kids, Healthy Kids Inc., healthcare partners, and dozens of West Virginia farmers. The project builds on a pilot launched with support from the Benedum Foundation, which tested whether a Food Production Hub network model could feasibly and sustainably serve institutional food buyers in West Virginia.

The Food Production Hub Model. Project Healthy Kids and Healthy Kids Inc. have developed a model that sources raw agricultural products from local farmers, trains and employs staff (including individuals in substance abuse recovery) to prepare chef-created, dietitian-approved, from-scratch meals that are nutrient dense. These meals are distributed to childcare centers, Head Start programs, charter schools, senior centers, substance abuse recovery facilities, summer feeding programs, and hospitals across West Virginia. Each hub functions as both a meal preparation facility and, increasingly, as an industrial food preparation center capable of processing and preserving seasonal agricultural products (such as tomato sauce and frozen squash) for year-round institutional use.

The project operates Food Production Hubs in Monongalia County (the flagship pilot site), Taylor County (in development), and Cabell County (relocated from the original Kanawha County plan). As of the most recent reporting period, the project has served over 700,000 meals, trained and employed 32 workers, and developed production plans with over 80 farmers.

Broader Context. The project operates at the intersection of four strategic sectors: local agriculture and farmer development, workforce training (including recovery workforce pathways), nutrition and public health, and regional economic development. It creates mid-tier value chains by connecting small and beginning farmers to institutional wholesale markets through the Food Production Hubs, which serve as right-sized entry points for producers scaling toward larger market access. The project also includes innovations in supply chain traceability, refrigerated meal technology (Modified Atmosphere Packaging), and retail distribution (frozen meal vending).

Scope of Work

The selected contractor will produce a comprehensive evaluative case study that accomplishes the following:

- Documents the Food Production Hub model, its origins, structure, and evolution from pilot to multi-site network.
- Evaluates the project's measurable impacts across its four goal areas: hub establishment and expansion, workforce development and training, agricultural economic development, and marketing and market expansion.
- Analyzes the project's role in developing mid-tier value chains and its contributions to the food, nutrition, and agriculture economy in West Virginia.
- Identifies key success factors, challenges, adaptations, and lessons learned throughout the project's implementation.
- Examines the sustainability and replicability of the model for other regions and contexts.
- Provides actionable recommendations for strengthening the model and informing future investment in similar food system initiatives.

The case study should be written for a broad audience including funders, policymakers, economic development practitioners, and food system stakeholders. It should be grounded in evidence collected through primary and secondary data sources.

Support Provided by WVFFC

WVFFC will provide the following to the selected contractor:

- The full grant narrative and all performance reports submitted to date.
- Introductions to project partners, including staff from Project Healthy Kids and Healthy Kids Inc.
- Coordination of site visits and interviews with project staff, partner organizations, farmers, and institutional buyers.
- Access to available project data, financial summaries, and supporting documentation as reasonably requested.

The contractor should expect to travel to project sites in Morgantown, Huntington, and Flemington, West Virginia. The contractor may also conduct interviews and request additional project data as needed to complete the case study. Travel costs should be included in the proposed budget.

Eligible Entities

This solicitation is open to a range of qualified entities, including but not limited to:

- Private consultants and independent researchers
- Consulting firms
- Universities and university departments
- Active and retired professors
- Nonprofit research organizations
- Evaluation and applied research firms

All proposers must be eligible to serve as a federal subcontractor.

Proposal Requirements

Proposals must not exceed 10 pages, excluding resumes/CVs and work samples. Proposals should be formatted as a single PDF and include the following components:

1. **Cover Letter:** A brief letter of introduction identifying the proposer, primary contact information, and a summary of the proposer's interest in and qualifications for this engagement.
2. **Approach to the Assignment:** A narrative describing the proposer's understanding of the project, the evaluative framework or conceptual approach to the case study, and how the proposer will address each element of the scope of work.
3. **Data Collection Methodology:** A full and complete description of the proposed data collection methodology, including a comprehensive list of all data points to be collected and the methods by which each will be collected (e.g., interviews, surveys, document review, site observations).
Note: The data collection methodology may not be changed once the agreement is awarded. Proposers should ensure that their methodology is thorough and final at the time of submission.
4. **Detailed Workplan and Timeline:** A detailed workplan with milestones and a timeline for completing all work, including data collection, drafting, sharing of the draft(s) with reasonable timeline for feedback from the project team and revisions. It is recommended that the case study be delivered in pieces for revision instead of a single draft. Final draft delivery is due by July 15, 2026.
Note: July 15th is a non-negotiable final deadline.
5. **Budget:** A complete budget breakdown showing all costs associated with the engagement, including personnel, travel, materials, and any other direct costs. The total budget may not exceed \$40,000.
Note: Given the timeframe of this project, the contractor will receive one payment for the full cost of the project at the conclusion and acceptance of the final case study.
6. **Resumes/CVs:** Current resumes or CVs for all persons who will be engaged in the work. (Does not count toward the 10-page limit.)
7. **Relevant Work Samples:** References to or copies of relevant prior work, such as published case studies, program evaluations, or applied research reports. (Does not count toward the 10-page limit.)
8. **Disclosure of Conflicts of Interest:** A written disclosure of any previous work with Healthy Kids Inc. or Project Healthy Kids, and any potential or perceived conflicts of interest or duality of interest. If none exist, a statement to that effect is required.

Timeline

Milestone	Date
RFP Issued	April 8, 2026
Deadline for Proposer Questions	April 20, 2026
Proposals Due	April 30, 2026
Interviews (if necessary)	May 8, 2026
Award Announcement	May 11, 2026
Final Case Study Delivered	July 15, 2026

Evaluation Criteria and Scoring

Proposals will be reviewed and scored by a committee of six (6) reviewers. Each reviewer will independently score proposals using the criteria below, and scores will be averaged to determine the final ranking. The maximum possible score is 100 points.

Criteria	Description	Points
Relevant and Recent Work Experience	Demonstrated experience conducting case studies, program evaluations, or applied research in food systems, agriculture, economic development, public health, or related fields. Preference for work completed within the last five years.	15
Quality of Approach	Clarity and strength of the proposed evaluative framework, analytical approach, and alignment with the scope of work.	15
Data Collection Methodology	Rigor, completeness, and appropriateness of the proposed data collection plan, including the comprehensiveness of the data points identified and the feasibility of collection methods.	15
Workplan and Timeline Feasibility	Clarity and realism of the proposed workplan, with well-defined milestones that demonstrate the work can be completed by July 15, 2026.	10
Understanding of Subject Matter	Demonstrated familiarity with local and regional food systems, mid-tier value chains, institutional food procurement, workforce development, or rural economic development in Appalachia or similar contexts.	10
Qualifications of Personnel	Strength of resumes/CVs for all team members, including relevant education, professional credentials, and prior experience with comparable projects.	10
Writing Quality and Communication	Quality of the proposal as a writing sample, including organization, clarity of expression, and attention to detail.	10
Budget Reasonableness	Appropriateness and transparency of the proposed budget relative to the scope of work. Clear justification for all line items.	10
Independence and Objectivity	Degree to which the proposer can conduct the evaluation free from conflicts of interest, demonstrated by the required disclosure and the overall positioning of the proposer relative to the project.	5

Total: 100 Points

Terms and Conditions

- WVFFC reserves the right to reject any or all proposals, to waive any informality in the proposal process, and to negotiate with any proposer as deemed to be in the best interest of the project.
- WVFFC reserves the right to request clarification or additional information from any proposer.
- WVFFC may elect to interview finalists before making a final selection. Interviews, if necessary, will be conducted on May 8, 2026.

- The selected contractor will enter into a subcontract agreement with WVFFC. This engagement is funded by a federal grant through the Appalachian Regional Commission, and the subcontract will include applicable federal terms and conditions.
- All work product, data, and deliverables produced under this agreement will be the property of WVFFC.
- Issuance of this RFP does not obligate WVFFC to make an award or to pay any costs incurred by proposers in the preparation of proposals.

Deliverables

The selected contractor is expected to produce the following:

- Draft Case Study for WVFFC review and comment, delivered on a schedule to be established in the final workplan.
- Final Written Case Study Report incorporating WVFFC feedback, delivered in its final form no later than July 15, 2026. The report should be professionally formatted and suitable for distribution to funders, policymakers, and partners.

How to Apply

Submit your complete proposal as a single PDF document to:

Apply@wvfoodandfarm.org

Deadline: April 30, 2026, by 11:59 PM Eastern Time

Late submissions will not be accepted. Proposals that are incomplete or that do not address all required components may be disqualified from consideration.