



Contact: Noah Bloedorn, REAP Food Group Email: noahb@reapfoodgroup.org

USDA Funding Awarded to Develop Dane County Regional Food System Action Plan

Jan. 25, 2024 - The [United States Department of Agriculture](#) (USDA) has selected a dynamic coalition of food system partners in Dane County as one of the recipients of the 2023 [Regional Food System Partnership](#) (RFSP) grants. Led by REAP Food Group, the project aims to collaboratively craft a community-driven regional process culminating in the development of a comprehensive regional food system action plan.

The esteemed partnership team, consisting of key organizations such as the [Dane County Food Council](#), [UW-Madison Dane County Extension](#), [Madison Food Policy Council](#), [Public Health Madison & Dane County](#), [Wisconsin Food Systems, Inc.](#), [Dane County Food Collective](#), [Mosaic LLC](#), and [Sift Consulting LLC](#), will spearhead this transformative two-year initiative scheduled to run through late 2025.

The USDA grant holds paramount importance in driving a two-year community-driven regional process for the comprehensive development of a regional food system action plan by late 2025. Marcia Caton Campbell, former Executive Director of Rooted, underscores the grant's significance, envisioning it as a catalyst for a deep community-engaged process shaping a long-desired food systems action plan in the Madison and Dane County region. This initiative aligns seamlessly with the [2018 City of Madison Comprehensive Plan](#), which emphasized the necessity for a regional food systems plan.

To mobilize individuals toward building a food plan, Dane County Food Council Chair Bill Warner initiated a joint food council work group in early 2021. Focused on addressing food system gaps laid bare by the COVID-19 pandemic, the group's efforts resulted in the crucial [Dane County Pandemic Food System Final Report](#), published in March 2023 by Sift Consulting, LLC. The report highlights the urgency of allocating resources to materialize a regional food system action plan. Warner sees this plan as the missing piece essential for optimizing the abundant food system resources in the area. This comprehensive approach integrates diverse stakeholders, including local farmers, food retailers, institutional buyers, food banks, pantries, community organizations, and residents. The Dane County Pandemic Food System Final Report, serving as a foundational resource, guides the project's mission to strengthen and optimize the local food system.

Match funding from Dane County and additional contributions will supplement the USDA grant, ensuring a comprehensive approach to strengthening the local food system. Dane County Board Supervisor Yogesh Chawla emphasizes that the community-driven regional food action plan will serve as a blueprint for filling food gaps and creating a sustainable food production and distribution system.

Expressing gratitude for the prestigious grant, Philip Kauth, Executive Director at REAP Food Group, states,

“We believe this food plan will help carry out REAP’s mission for an equitable food system.”

For those interested in staying updated on the development of the food system action plan project, signing up for the REAP Food Group e-newsletter or visiting REAP Food Group is recommended. For media inquiries, please contact Noah Bloedorn, the project manager, at noahb@reapfoodgroup.org.