



## City of New Haven

### Food System Policy Division

March 30, 2021

The Honorable Tyisha Walker-Myers  
President, Board of Alders  
City of New Haven  
165 Church Street  
New Haven, CT 06510

Dear Alder President Walker-Myers,

In accordance with the Order of the Board of Aldermen authorizing the Mayor to apply for and accept all grants on behalf of the City of New Haven, passed on October 17, 1994, I am writing to respectfully advise the Honorable Board of an application by the City of New Haven's Food System Policy Division (FSPD) to the Kendall Foundation. The FSPD is applying for up to \$250,000 over a two-year period.

The FSPD operates through a food justice framework and across three thematic priorities - health equity, socio-economic justice, and environmental justice. The core of these three themes spotlights our goal of developing and supporting equitable food, farming, and land-use policies. The ideal project or policy would fall at the intersection of these priorities, as many of our current projects do. We strongly focus on addressing root causes and striving for systemic change - i.e. tackling upstream solutions such as economic security and secure land access - for system-wide impact.

Food entrepreneurship plays a unique and vital role in New Haven's food ecosystem. The array of entrepreneurial pathways in New Haven - ranging from chefs, caterers, food truck operators, and bakers, to value-added producers and packaged food and beverage makers - makes New Haven both a launchpad and landing area to grow and settle all types of food-based businesses. By providing entrepreneurs with the right regulatory, information, and financial support, the FSPD can help strengthen the local food system and build community prosperity, in turn creating a more vibrant community. Supporting entrepreneurship across the spectrum can serve as one tool to achieve a wide variety of community impact goals, from job creation to workforce training, healthy food access to nutrition education, farm viability to localizing the food economy, and from neighborhood revitalization to tourism. Food-based entrepreneurship also provides opportunities for historically marginalized populations since it has a low barrier to entry and is directly scalable. Broadly, we envision New Haven as a place where food-based entrepreneurs build their businesses, hospitality students intern, reentering residents train and connect with food-based jobs, urban farmers connect with potential client businesses, existing food-based businesses innovate, and community members improve their health and strengthen their social bonds through food.

Further, we strive to support economic opportunity for all residents and to increase leadership by Black, Indigenous, people of color (BIPOC), and immigrant food entrepreneurs. We are especially keen on assisting food entrepreneurs who have recently launched or are working toward launching a food business (such as a food truck, catering company, or food product line) right here in New Haven.

At an even broader systems-level, public officials have the opportunity and responsibility to leverage their power and expertise to address the current trajectory of chronic disease in the US. Half of the adults in the US have one or more preventable chronic diseases, many of which are diet-related. In New Haven, low-income BIPOC communities endure



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disproportionately worse health outcomes and increased mortality rates because of systemic and structural inequities, including higher rates of chronic disease, especially among food-insecure individuals.

Therefore, it is critical that public officials engage in public health prevention strategies. Food procurement - the processes through which institutions purchase and serve food - offers powerful opportunities for public officials to partner with public institutions to prioritize accessibility to nutritious, sustainable, and fairly-produced food and to generate sustained benefit to population health. The process by which these institutions purchase raw and prepared foods and beverages is a valuable tool to prioritize accessibility to foods that are not only nutritious but also produced in a way that upholds the principles of equity and sustainability throughout the supply chain. We also believe that supporting institutions to communicate their food purchasing values and to develop and market a values-based buying system that includes local and regional foods will stimulate the market and help institutions play their part in setting and meeting regional farm-to-institution and statewide farm-to-school goals. We are currently exploring the Good Food Purchasing program - a national framework, adopted by several cities already, to improve transparency and accountability in public food procurement focused on the values of support for local economies, environmental sustainability, valued workforce, nutritional health, and animal welfare.

Both initiatives – food entrepreneurship and values-based institutional food procurement - are in direct alignment with Recommendation 3 (under Two Years, Environment and Climate Change) in Mayor Elicker's Transition Report - to support and expand policy initiatives and collaborations in food systems.

Potential funding from the Kendall Foundation would provide the FSPD with the unique opportunity to thoroughly identify, research, and develop the policy changes necessary to create an enabling environment for both food entrepreneurs and values-based institutional food procurement, in turn moving us toward health equity, environmental justice, and more vibrant communities. These projects will be performed in collaboration with the communities that have been most impacted most by structural and systemic inequity, to ensure that these changes meet their needs.

Thank you for your time and consideration. Please do not hesitate to contact me if you have any further questions.

Sincerely,

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