

# Greater Twin Cities United Way Funding Opportunity Full Lives Request for Proposal (RFP)

## Summary

Greater Twin Cities United Way is launching the next generation of Full Lives, a multi-year initiative focused on cultivating food justice in our region. Our vision is to create a thriving and equitable Twin Cities regional food system where all communities have physical and economic access to food that meets their cultural, dietary, and nutritional needs.

Phase one of Full Lives will support collaboratives in the nine-county Twin Cities area working to build thriving and equitable food systems in their community.

### **Objectives of Phase One:**

- Foster collaborations among stakeholders in the regional food system.
- Promote sustainable solutions for addressing food justice issues.
- Empower communities to address systemic challenges within the food system.
- Enhance the capacity of collaboratives to implement projects effectively.

We anticipate awarding a total of \$1.2 million in grants to support three collaboratives working to address the complex challenges in their community's food system. We anticipate each **collaborative will be awarded between \$250,000 - \$400,000.**

We welcome proposals that showcase community-driven approaches and a commitment to building resilience within the local food system, recognizing that ongoing efforts are already underway. We seek collaborations that can benefit from additional resources to bolster their existing work and advance their vision for a more equitable community food system.

Applications are due by **May 10, 2024**, in our grant portal. Please visit our [website](#) to begin your application.

### **Key Dates for Applicants**

RFP Live Q & A	March 27, 2024
Grants Portal Registration Opens- registration required to apply (more information below)	March 27, 2024
<b>RFP/Round 1 Application Opens</b>	<b>April 1, 2024</b>
Open Office Hours with PO	April 15 & 18 and May 7 & 9
<b>RFP Closes</b>	<b>May 10, 2024, at 5pm</b>
Notification of Round 2 Interview	May 24, 2024
Round 2 Interview	June 6-7, 2024
Notification of Funding Award	Mid-Late June
Grants Awarded	July 1, 2024
Cohort Kick-Off Celebration	August or September 2024

For more information, contact: [rfp@gtcuw.org](mailto:rfp@gtcuw.org)

## **Background**

Greater Twin Cities United Way exists to fuel lasting change toward a community where all people thrive regardless of income, race, or place. Our mission is to unite changemakers, advocate for social good, and develop solutions to address the challenges no one can solve alone.

We focus on both urgent needs of people today and the systemic work required to create long-term change. Our food strategy mirrors this approach and spans the continuum from hunger relief to sustainable community food systems. This funding opportunity is focused on long-term change in our regional food systems.

## ***Innovation Initiatives***

Disrupting inequities requires long-term, systemic change. One way we work toward that change is through our innovation initiatives. These initiatives identify urgent gaps in our community and co-create solutions that drive positive, lasting change. To do this, we collaborate with nonprofit partners, people with lived experience, government agencies and donors to create large-scale, time-bound initiatives that accelerate sustainable systems change in our region.

In 2015, we teamed up with General Mills to launch [Full Lives](#), a program aimed at strengthening North Minneapolis's local food system. Over two years, \$1.5 million was invested in innovative local food system projects through a cohort of 11 organizations. Now, we're scaling Full Lives to make an even greater impact, supporting communities across the region in transforming their food systems.

## ***Listening and Learning From Our Community***

Recognizing the evolving landscape of food security and driven by our commitment to community needs, we began a two-year journey focused on listening, learning, and planning. Informed by insights from the first generation of Full Lives and extensive community dialogue, we identified significant gaps in Community Food Systems work within our region, particularly in holistic funding approaches. This presented an opportunity to leverage Greater Twin Cities United Way's **Innovation Initiative** model. Through research, dialogue with stakeholders and community food systems actors, and a comprehensive analysis of the food landscape in our nine-county region, we developed a robust framework to address the pressing challenges in our region's food systems.

To further strengthen the strategy, an advisory group composed of individuals working across the community food systems continuum was created. This group meets monthly to provide valuable feedback, insight, and clarity, ensuring that our initiative remains responsive to the diverse needs and perspectives within our community.

## ***Members include:***

- Marcus Carpenter, Founder, Route 1
- Carissa Dillion, Food Security Coordinator, Ramsey County
- Louise Matson (White Earth Band of Ojibwe), Executive Director, Division of Indian Work
- Theresa McCormick, Executive Director, The Good Acre
- J. DeVon Nolan, Primary/CEO, Bete' Noire Consulting, LLC

## **Full Lives: Next Generation**

At the heart of Full Lives is the promotion of community food security, recognizing its pivotal role in addressing health and economic disparities. What sets Full Lives apart is its adaptable, community-driven approach, tailored to the unique needs of each community. Over 50% of food-insecure individuals in Minnesota, particularly People of Color, reside in our nine-county region, with only 3% of all food agencies in the region providing fresh food. These statistics underscore the urgent need for systemic approaches that go beyond addressing immediate food needs.

Full Lives delves into the intricacies of the entire food system—a concept known as a community food system. **This [holistic approach](#) integrates food production, processing, distribution, and consumption in a way that fosters environmental stewardship, economic vitality, and improved social and nutritional well-being.** Our ultimate goal is to develop sustainable solutions that empower communities and foster resilience and food sovereignty, prioritizing local and inclusive strategies.

The first phase of Full Lives will support collaboratives in the nine-county Twin Cities area working to build thriving and equitable food systems in their community.

### **Core objectives of phase one include:**

- Fostering collaborations among stakeholders in the regional food system.
- Promoting sustainable solutions for addressing food justice issues.
- Empowering communities to address systemic challenges within the food system.
- Enhancing the capacity of collaboratives to implement projects effectively.

**Guiding Principles:** These represent the values integral to our approach in strengthening regional community food systems. They encapsulate critical elements necessary for success and embody the essence of community food systems efforts:

- Community-Led Initiatives
- Equity, Inclusivity, and BIPOC-Led Initiatives
- Local Ecosystem Development
- Local Food Production and Agriculture
- Systems-Centric Approach
- Environmental Sustainability

**Model:** The Full Lives model describes our approach in how we engage with partners to execute our initiative:

- **Bolstering and Amplifying Existing Work:** We enhance current community food system initiatives by providing funding, convening a community of practice, and facilitating connections among organizations.
- **Support and Strengthening:** We support organizations by providing expertise, resources, and guidance to assist them in achieving their goals. Additionally, we enhance capacity through funding, technical expertise, and strategic connections.
- **Cohort Model:** We encourage collaboration and knowledge-sharing among participating organizations for collective learning and growth.
- **Evaluation and Learning Plan:** We establish systems to continuously improve based on progress and outcomes.

- **Partnering with Impactful Organizations:** We collaborate with non-profit partners and collaboratives already engaged in community food systems work.
- **Flexible and Responsive Approach:** Our initiatives are tailored to each community's self-identified needs, allowing for scalable adaptations.

## Funding Overview

Phase One Full Lives will allocate **\$1.2 million in grants** to support collaborative efforts addressing our regions community food system challenges. We anticipate funding **three collaboratives between \$250,000 - \$400,000 each.**

### **Funding Eligibility**

***Collaborations must meet the following requirements to apply:***

- The Lead Organization must be a 501c3 nonprofit organization or have a fiscal sponsor who is a 501c3.
- Your collaboration must designate one organization as the "Lead Organization" responsible for administering the grant funding to partner organizations. See details as outlined in RFP under section "Lead Organization Responsibility."
- The Lead Organization's budget for the current fiscal year must be \$250,000 or higher.
- Collaboratives must operate within the Greater Twin Cities United Way nine-county service region (Anoka, Carver, Chisago, Dakota, Hennepin, Isanti, Ramsey, Scott, Washington).
- Collaboratives must target high food insecurity areas within our nine-county service region.
- Eligible collaborations should involve a mix of organizations ensuring diversity and expertise across the partnership. Eligible entities for collaboration include nonprofit organizations, community-based groups, governmental agencies, academic institutions, and other stakeholders actively engaged in addressing food justice and community food system issues.
- Collaboratives must involve partnerships with a **minimum of three organizations**, one of which is the lead entity responsible for administering grant funding.

**Important Note on Financial Review:** Your lead organization must meet the financial standards for Greater Twin Cities United Way funded partners based on a review of financial documents such as your most recent financial statements, form 990, and audit (if your organization is required by law to complete an audit) in order to receive funding. **Organizations required to complete an audit MUST have a "clean" (unqualified) audit opinion in order to be eligible for funding under this RFP.** You will be asked to upload financial documents as part of the application. Please note that organizations are only eligible to receive a maximum grant size of up to 20% of their overall organizational budget.

For any special considerations related to these criteria, please contact us at [rfp@gtcuw.org](mailto:rfp@gtcuw.org) to determine your eligibility.

### ***Collaboratives vs. Individual Organizations:***

In this phase of Full Lives, we believe collaborations are more effective than individual organizations because they can address multiple interconnected challenges or opportunities within the community food system. Collaborations take a comprehensive approach that considers various factors, supporting a wide range of initiatives aimed at building a resilient and sustainable food system. Subsequent phases of Full Lives will be developed collaboratively as we learn, adapt, and progress.

## **Lead Organization Responsibility**

The Lead Organization within a collaborative partnership assumes key responsibilities, including grant administration, project management, stakeholder communication, budget management, learning and evaluation, and risk management.

## **Funding Priorities**

***These criteria are not required but your collaborative will be scored based on how well they meet these criteria. Collaboratives that score highest will be most competitive for funding.***

- **Racial Justice, Equity, and Inclusivity, including Rural Communities** - We prioritize collaboratives with a clear focus on racial justice, equity, and inclusivity, actively working towards addressing disparities and promoting fairness within the community, with a specific consideration for the unique challenges faced by rural communities.
  - **Board and Senior Leadership** - We prioritize collaboratives where 50% or more of the aggregated Senior Leaders and Board members collectively identify as Black, Indigenous, Latine, Asian, Pacific Islander and People of Color.
- **Community-Led Initiatives** - We prioritize proposals for projects where community input is valued in decision-making processes, promoting a sense of community ownership and engagement.
- **Local Ecosystem Development** - We prioritize nurturing a robust local ecosystem by fostering partnerships with local organizations, businesses, and community leaders. These collaborations are aimed at harnessing collective resources and optimizing the impact of our initiatives.
- **State of Readiness and Clarity** - We prioritize collaboratives that exhibit a clear state of readiness, understanding what they need and showcasing readiness for effective implementation and goal achievement.
- **Community Food Systems Approach** - We prioritize proposals that emphasize a holistic approach to community food systems, addressing various interconnected aspects that promote food resilience, sustainable production, strengthen local food economies, equitable production, and/or equitable distribution.

## **Utilization of Grant Funds for Project Outcomes and Impact**

Grant funds can be utilized to achieve project outcomes and impact, covering expenses such as project implementation, personnel costs, equipment, training, travel, evaluation, administration, collaboration, outreach, technical assistant, and contingency needs. We do not require collaboratives to report on how they spend their money, but we may ask for a high-level overview of how grant funds were used over the course of the grant to support learning and evaluation and plan future grantmaking.

## **Learning and Evaluation**

Full Lives is a new initiative committed to systemic change, learning, and continuous improvement. Funded partners will work with Greater Twin Cities United Way to understand the impact of Full Lives in the communities they support, within their organizations and collaboratives, and on community food systems overall.

Greater Twin Cities United Way learning and evaluation plans are designed with a goal of minimizing the burden on organizations. The final outcomes, indicators and data collection approaches may be informed with funded collaboratives. We also welcome alternative ways of understanding a collaborative's impact. Full Lives will provide support for designing and implementing community engagement activities as needed.

A more detailed Evaluation and Learning plan will be shared with funded collaboratives at the kickoff convening. In the meantime, grantees should expect to engage in the following evaluation activities over the course of the grant period.

<b>Activity</b>	<b>Frequency</b>	<b>Grantee Engagement</b>
Developmental conversations	Bi-monthly; in conjunction with check-ins with Full Lives staff	Share insights and reflections on grant activities, collaborative policy and practices changes, and the initiative design
Peer-to-Peer convening input	Quarterly starting in winter 2025	Complete post-event surveys
Community engagement	To be determined in collaboration with the collaborative and Full Lives staff; may be included in existing community engagement work	Gather qualitative and/or quantitative input from community members about the collaboratives' work and their perceptions of community food systems
Mid-grant reflection meeting	February 2025	Share reflections and recommendations for the remainder of the grant period
Final grant report	End of grant period (December 2025)	Complete a written or oral report describing: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Progress on collaborative goals, outcomes, and indicators</li> <li>• Changes in collaborative practices, policies, and procedures</li> <li>• Community engagement outcomes</li> <li>• Recommendations for the initiative</li> </ul>

### **Grant Activities**

Participating collaborations will operate within a cohort model, collaborating with Full Lives staff to establish goals and develop a plan for achieving them at the onset of the grant period. In addition, the Full Lives cohort will convene regularly for peer-to-peer learning and strategic planning sessions. Meeting frequency and agenda items will be collaboratively determined based on the needs and interests of the grantees.

The inaugural cohort of funded partners will be launched in July 2024, with grant funding and cohort activities running from July 2024 – December 2025.

Full Lives will provide comprehensive support to the cohort, including:

- Grant funding to support collaborations' capacity needs for strengthening their identified Community Food System strategies and activities.

- Technical assistance tailored to collaborations’ identified needs.
- Regular peer support, learning, and networking sessions through a Community of Practice.
- Bi-monthly learning conversations with the Full Lives Program Officer to offer support and gather qualitative progress and learning information from each collaborative.
- Promotion of a narrative and mental model shift towards a both-and approach, integrating short-term and long-term Community Food System integration goals.

## Application Process

### How To Apply

Collaboratives wishing to apply for this RFP must submit an online application by **5pm CST Friday, May 10, 2024**.

**IMPORTANT:** Greater Twin Cities United Way has recently changed its funding portal to the software system Andar. To access this funding opportunity (and subsequent GTCUW funding opportunities), you will first need to register for a Grants Portal account linked to GTCUW, which you can do by following this [link](#) to the portal registration form. Once you have submitted this registration form, you will receive an email within three business days directing you to log in to your new Grants Portal account, where you will complete the full application. If you have already submitted this form and completed your account registration, you can follow this [link](#) to access your account and the full application. Please refer to [this one-pager](#) for further details on how to register for your Andar account and navigate the portal.

### The application process consists of two phases:

1. *Written Application:* Collaboratives will submit a written application. Applications will be scored by a team of Greater Twin Cities United Way staff and community reviewers with knowledge of community food systems against an evaluation rubric.
2. *Virtual Conversation:* Top-scoring collaborations will be invited to participate in a virtual conversation to talk more about their work and learn more about the Full Lives initiative. Prior to these calls, detailed agendas, discussion points, and insights into the selection process will be provided to ensure transparency and facilitate productive discussions.

Both the written application and virtual conversation will be scored against an evaluation rubric. Questions will be asked in each of the categories below and weighted as indicated.

Area of Assessment	% of Total Score
Racial Justice, Equity, and Inclusivity, including Rural Communities <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Vision (20%)</li> <li>• Board and Senior Leadership (10%)</li> </ul>	30%
Community Food Systems Approach	25%
State of Readiness and Clarity	20%
Community-Led Initiatives	15%
Local Ecosystem Development	10%
<b>Total</b>	<b>100%</b>

To download a document version of the written application [please click here](#), and to see the full scoring rubric, [please click here](#).

Collaboratives with the highest scores will be most competitive for funding. Funding decisions will be communicated to applicants via email by mid-to-late June 2024. Please refer to “Key Dates for Applications.”

Greater Twin Cities United Way reserves the right to make awards that support our cultivation of a balanced grant portfolio that most effectively advances our mission, goals, and priorities. Toward this end, and in addition to criteria identified in this RFP, funding decisions may include considerations of geography, scale and ecosystem factors, among other factors.

### **Grant Terms and Payments**

- Grants are anticipated to be between \$250,000 - \$400,000; grant term is between July 2024 – December 2025.
- Grant award will be made in 3 installments upon signature of the grant agreement; 85% of the grant award will be paid out in the first two installments.
- The Lead Organization will be asked to provide direct deposit information for payment.
- All members of the funded collaboratives will be required to participate in the following:
  - Mid-grant reflection meetings
  - Bi-monthly learning conversations with the Full Lives Program Officer
  - Participation in Community of Practice—cadence and dates to be determined collectively.
  - Final reporting at the end of the grant period.

### **Application Resources and Other Questions**

During the application period, Greater Twin Cities United Way staff are available to answer your questions and assist with your application.

- The Full Lives Program Officer held a live Q&A on Wednesday, March 27, 2024. You can find the video recording of the session [here](#), and the slide deck from the session [here](#).
- Four office hours will be held by the Full Lives Program Officer the following dates from 10 AM – 2 PM CST. Click on the date to sign up for a 15-minute slot.
  - [Monday, April 15<sup>th</sup>](#)
  - [Thursday, April 18<sup>th</sup>](#)
  - [Tuesday, May 7<sup>th</sup>](#)
  - [Thursday, May 9<sup>th</sup>](#)
- Contact us at [rfp@gtcuw.org](mailto:rfp@gtcuw.org) and a Greater Twin Cities United Way staff person will respond to your question within 3 business days.