

Request for Proposals – February 2012

Increasing the Viability of the Local Sustainable Food System

Purpose of the RFP

This Metcalf call for proposals is aimed at identifying initiatives that will increase the likelihood of long-term success throughout the local food system in southern Ontario.

Interest and engagement with local food is growing at a phenomenal rate yet proven approaches to increase the probability of long-term success more broadly throughout the local sustainable food system (e.g. growing, distributing, marketing, processing, selling) are not readily apparent. It's important to note, however, that there are indeed many promising initiatives that may ultimately serve as excellent examples of how individuals, communities, organizations and other entities can best ensure a viable local sustainable food system now and in the future. Metcalf's objective is to locate and support them.

Background

Food and agricultural activities continue to be major drivers of Ontario's prosperity. Southern Ontario's local sustainable food system is a small but growing component of a resilient food sector, one that presents an opportunity for building competitiveness while addressing issues of environmental and community well-being.

During the 1940s and early 1950s local produce was the primary source of fruits and vegetables for residents of southern Ontario – both fresh and canned, and sometime later, frozen. Farmers in rural southern Ontario supplied food not only to regions throughout southern Ontario but across Canada and farther afield. For example, in 1941, Prince Edward County canneries shipped over 1.5 million cases of tomatoes, representing over 40% of the total canned tomatoes produced in Canada. In tandem with a shift towards increasing numbers of people moving off the farm and into urban centres, a trend that began in the 1960s, less food became available from local sustainable sources.

More recently though, throughout North America - including southern Ontario - more local produce is being grown and sold in more places and being bought and promoted by more individuals, writers, restaurants and institutions than during the preceding three decades. This expansion of the local sustainable food system is occurring in both rural and urban parts of southern Ontario.

Metcalf has supported a wide variety of local food activities over the past decade, activities that address just about all aspects of the local sustainable food system. But nearly 10 years on, while the movement has expanded -driven by the commitment, energy and creativity of many of its adherents - short, medium and long-term viability remains uncertain for a significant percentage of those who look to combine ecological, social, economic and other benefits with operating as part of a local sustainable food and agriculture system.

Parameters

This is an open call to identify models and practices that support an environmentally sound, economically strong, and socially relevant local food system in southern Ontario with an emphasis on long-term viability. The proposal should focus on approaches designed, tested and proven at the local level.

Examples of the types of challenges the proposal might address include:

- Demonstrating the ecological and economic benefits of applying initiative and creativity to enhance long-term viability of the local, sustainable food system;
- Strengthening key drivers of long-term viability of local sustainable food and agriculture; initiatives (e.g. planning, management, operation, land, communication/marketing, risk management, building relationships/partnership, and/or others as appropriate);
- Bridging real or perceived gaps between Ontario's large agri-food industry and the local sustainable food system towards mutually beneficial outcomes;
- Increasing year round access to produce grown in southern Ontario;
- Demonstrating tangible benefits of full cost accounting for all dimensions of local food production (e.g. taking into account the ecological and economic benefits of soil improvement over time);
- Linking long-term viability to urban/rural partnerships;
- Demonstrating the ecological and economic benefits of small-scale and local;
- Determining "alternative" market mechanisms that have made a positive contribution to long-term viability; and
- Overcoming barriers to long-term viability.

Metcalf seeks to support concrete examples of practices and approaches that provide strong examples of "the how" of enabling long-term viability throughout the local sustainable food system. Proposals should focus on practical demonstrations of proof of concept or the positive results of taking action. Proposals should also include a brief communications plan for identifying and promoting the benefits of the work undertaken.

No individual application should exceed \$100,000. Projects of one year or less are encouraged but proposals with timelines up to 18 months will be considered. Funding for projects up to 18 months may be awarded in two installments.

Only organizations that have a current charitable registration number from the Revenue Canada Agency can receive funding through this request for proposals.

Evaluation Process & Assessment Criteria

The proposals will be evaluated by the Foundation and its advisors. Evaluation criteria include:

- the likelihood that the work undertaken will make a significant contribution to the long-term viability of the local sustainable food system;
- the degree to which the proposal seeks to demonstrate practical, hands-on proof of concept or highly developed models of good practice;
- the expertise and experience of the project team;
- the proposed communications plan; and
- the extent to which the proposal is rooted in environmental benefits in combination with economic, social, cultural and/or technological ones.

Application Process

Those interested in submitting a proposal should send a letter of interest to the Foundation by April 19, 2012. In addition to a Metcalf cover page (download at metcalffoundation.com/downloads), the letter of interest should not exceed three pages and should contain:

- a clear set of objectives that the proposal will address;
- a list of the anticipated practical outcomes that will strengthen long-term viability of the local sustainable food system;
- an overview of the proposed methodology;
- a summary of the proposed communications plan;
- a brief description of the experience and qualifications of the project team;
- a brief description of the participating organization or organizations; and
- a proposed budget with timelines.

Deadline

The deadline for submitting a Letter of Interest is **Thursday April 19, 2012**. Letters of interest should be addressed to:

Mary MacDonald
Environment Program Director
Metcalf Foundation
174 Avenue Road
Toronto, ON M5R 2J1

Please provide **2 paper copies of the letter of interest and all related materials, printed double-sided, and submit an electronic version in word to:**

Heather Dunford
Grants Manager
Metcalf Foundation
174 Avenue Road
Toronto, ON M5R 2J1

hdunford@metcalffoundation.com

If you have additional questions about this initiative please contact Mary MacDonald at mmacdonald@metcalffoundation.com or 416 926 0366 x 30.

Next Steps

Metcalf anticipates determining which applicants will be asked to submit a full proposal in late spring of 2012. All those who submit a letter of interest will be notified once decisions have been made.